PHILOSOPHISCHE FAKULTÄT DER UNIVERSITÄT ZÜRICH

Relating Political Press Coverage to Macro-Level Factors and Transnational Dynamics. A Four Country Comparison

Abhandlung
zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde der
Philosophischen Fakultät
der
Universität Zürich

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This dissertation is part of the larger NCCR Democracy research project *Mediatization of Political Reality: Implications of Media-centered Reporting Styles for Democracy*, lead by Prof. Dr. Frank Esser and in collaboration with Bernd Spanier and Andrea Umbricht. The author thanks Prof. Dr. Esser and her colleagues for their support.

The author acknowledges the social impact of language on gender norms and supports efforts to make language more gender-neutral, thus gender pronouns are used alternately and interchangeably in this thesis.

All translations of quotations are by the author unless indicated otherwise.

For my parents.

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After more than 50 years, the following question posed by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (*Four Theories of the Press*, 1956) has become all but obsolete: "Why does [the press] apparently serve different purposes and appear in widely different forms in different countries?" (quoted after Hallin & Mancini 2004, p. 1). In the first place, its relevance stems from the unquestionable importance of the media for public, social and political purposes. Information about current occurrences, communication of crucial political information, and mediation between the government and the people is in modern Western democracies all carried out by the organs of mass media. By this, the media inevitably constitute an influence in daily public and political communication - it has long shaped political communication among politicians as well as citizens in its role as informant and mediator between the governing and the governed. Thus, it can be seen as constituting a social institution, "enduring sets of rules, which at the same time limit and enable social action"(Donges 2006, p. 565). The media interact with other social and political institutions and create a plural institutional environment which defines if "the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions" (Suchman, 1995, p. 570). They are thus of great interest for any scholar examining the public sphere, communication in general or political communication specifically.

Besides assuming this fundamental role in the public sphere, the media`s importance has gained momentum and suspense over time fueled by two specific processes, because while social institutions do provide certain stability, their rules and interrelationships are nonetheless dynamic and evolve and change over time (Hasse & Krücken, 1999). The first process denotes the increasingly dominant and central position of media in the public sphere, and can be described as mediatization: Over the last decades, the media has grown to constitute an idiosyncratic environment in which many aspects of modern societies take place (one of the more important of which is certainly politics). The second process is constituted by the ever-growing possibilities of international and transnational exchange made possible through globalization. Mutual influence of institutions is no longer limited to a national context but can presumably also happen transnationally, which means that the structure of institutionalized rules in which political actors, media actors and citizens are embedded in and within which they are (inter)acting has become more dynamic and less dependent on national factors only.

The combination of these two processes expands a suspicion which has always been one of the driving forces of comparative political communication research: An increased influence or even dominance of the media in the political context as well as a cross-national homogenization of the media is feared to hamper democratic processes (Jarren & Donges 2006, Mazzoleni & Schulz 1999). Especially commercialized political media coverage presumed as prevalent in the US is feared to have exceeding influence on political media coverage in European countries, and the consequences are suspected to prove detrimental to democracy worldwide, leading to a disregard of national political contexts and necessities in favor of commercial success.

In the present study, we exemplary examine the press, as "oldest" of the traditional mass media outlets, to take a closer look at the actual manifestations of the notions of mediatization, transnational convergence and democratic value in its political coverage. By this we are seeking to build a comprehensive framework for future comparative political communication research that takes into account national contexts of and transnational influences on media content, integrates media content`s longitudinal developments and also provides an assessment of its potential democratic value. The present decades present a unique chance to examine the above mentioned processes and resulting changes in situ, as in reality they do not constitute endless continuous processes, but should rather be seen as processes of transition, which at one point might not be detectable anymore for the audience or scholar. The awareness of these proceedings could be dwindling, concurrently with the decrease of national idiosyncrasies of political media coverage. However, presently, we are still very aware of the increasing dominance of the media in politics, of transnational changes, of diminishing national styles and characteristics of political media coverage. We are situated in the middle of actual processes of change - this provides us with a singular chance at examining the phenomenon of mediatization and transnational alignment of political media coverage styles in process. It also means that in our research we can take a deeper look at the interdependencies of transnational dynamics, global phenomena and national peculiarities and at how national characteristics might influence the development and dynamics of mediatization and transnational leveling or convergence. With this study, we want to seize the opportunity this situation presents to us. To do so, we have to first reference to the fact that inherent to all comparative political communication research is the assumption that contextual

factors systemically influence media production and content, or, in the words of Esser & Pfetsch (2004),

> […] we assume that the specific structures, norms, and values in political systems shape the political communication roles and behaviors. Therefore, comparative research is often designed in such a way that the countries are selected with regard to the contextual conditions of the object of research […]. Thus, the crucial questions to be answered are 1) What always applies regardless of the contextual influences? 2) How does the object of investigation `behave` under the influence of different contextual conditions? (p. 8)

Thus, comparative political communication research can be seen as "as comparisons between a minimum of two political systems or cultures (or their sub elements) with respect to at least one object of investigation relevant to communication research." (ibid. p. 385) Esser & Pfetsch describe this type of research as a quasi-experimental method in which the cases (i.e. countries) are selected to parallel the features of the independent variables, thereby "exposing" the object of analysis (for example press content as dependent variable) to varying conditions. This approach can yield results which the observation of more or less static national features cannot, and therefore constitutes the ideal instrument for the intents of this study: Comparative political communication research can facilitate the development of typologies, the contextualization of theories, and the establishment of generalizations. Comparison can provide explanations to similarities and differences between the political media content of various countries and quasi-causal linkages between contextual features and characteristics of political media content in different nation states.

However, simple comparison across countries is not enough for the purposes sketched above, as recent developments of communication systems and processes are no longer confined to national borders but rather constitute transnational, global trends. The observation of external variables next to variables concerning national context is becoming increasingly important. Again quoting from Esser & Pfetsch`s (2004) assessment of the challenges of global communication,

> […c]omparative studies in political communication can no longer concentrate on comparing systems A, B, and C alone, but must observe a variety of external variables, too. Analysis includes examining, first internal variables of the respective national context (A, B, C); second, external factors stemming from transnational diffusion and globalization processes; third, external factors from supranational integration processes; and fourth, measuring over time in order to identify the degree to which the mentioned processes affect the respective systems at several points in time […]. (p. 405)

Comparative political communication research thus provides a tool which can get at the essential character of political communication itself, namely the fact that it "varies between cultures which makes it necessary and instructive to analyze it from different cultural perspectives." (Graber, 1993) Additional benefits of comparative research, as listed by Blumler & Gurevitch (1995), are the adequacy of its findings for generalization, the prevention of naïve universalism and ethnocentrism, and the possibility to analyze not only isolated national processes but also transnational dynamics. But to ensure the success of comparative political communication research, it is ever more important that it be systematically guided by theory. As Reese (2007) states, "[i]t is difficult enough within a single national context to clearly explicate concepts and discuss them within consistent levels of analysis. As research moves across national boundaries, to include comparative questions, this clarity becomes even more important (and challenging)." (no page numbers) Esser & Pfetsch (2004) suggest the conduct of "highly contextualized comparative studies [… built] on an analytical framework divided into microlevel, mesolevel, and macrolevel." (p.398f.) We aim to do exactly this by analyzing and comparing the development and present character of patterns of political media coverage in different Western democracies throughout the last 50 years. We will examine the political press coverage of several Western democracies in a quasi-experimental structure to systematically examine which consequences contextual (internal) factors and transnational (external) factors have on the constant development of political press coverage. To prevent reliance on solely individual, coincidental influences on and characteristics of political media coverage in different countries, and to move the focus away from political media coverage as national idiosyncracy, we used the framework developed by Hallin & Mancini in their work *Comparing Media Systems* (2004) to select, group and contextualize several Western democracies. This clustering of factors allows a much clearer sight on global, systemic processes instead of singling out country-specific idiosyncracies. We expand on the work of Hallin & Mancini by including the factor of transnational and global processes and phenomena to their framework. This adds a longitudinal aspect to the clusters of similarities and differences in political media coverage which the two scholars summarize, and broadens the assumed causes and relationships of regionally distinct patterns of coverage in various clusters of country types. Lastly, we want to approach the normative question which has been driving so much comparative political communication research: Do mediatization and decreasing national differences in political

media coverage mean decreasing quality of this coverage? To assess this problem mainly means considering the question if this development can be seen as detrimental to democracy. We suggest to assess this assumption by taking not one universal, but rather various distinct understandings of democracy and their possible impact on different national styles and patterns of media reporting into account.

Thus, the goal of the present research is to provide a large-scaled, comprehensive framework of four focal aspects of comparative political communication research: (1) the detailed examination of the interplay between internal and external factors in the continuous development of political media coverage in different Western democracies as well as in an overview of the Western hemisphere, (2) the analysis of the actual effects and indicators of the ongoing process of mediatization on various types of political press coverage at various points in time, (3) the assessment of manifestations of transnational processes of convergence in various types of political press coverage, and lastly (4) a suggestion on how the the normative values and judgements connected with the development of a more transnationally homogeneous style of political media coverage (i.e. the assumed quality of such coverage) can be assessed comparatively by applying different understandings of democracy.
To reach these goals, we examine the following in more detail:

- The difference of press coverage between countries (see RQ1).
- Differences of coverage between newspaper types (see RQ2).
- Differences of press coverage over time between countries; indicators of transnational processes present (see RQ3).
- Adherence of coverage patterns in different countries to indicators of mediatization (see RQ3a).
- Importance of various influential factors on the micro-, meso- and macro-level on patterns of political press coverage (i.e. organizational factors, systemic national factors and transnational processes) (see RQ4).
- Understandings of democracy mirrored in the patterns of political press coverage in different countries (see RQ5).

Before analyzing these aspects in more empirical detail (see chapters method, results), we will provide a look at the insitutional role of the media, the linkage between internal and external factors and influences on the characteristics of national political press coverage, and the

theoretical assumptions behind the realization of the present examination via content analysis (see chapter 1). We will then describe in more detail the process of mediatization, the notion of commercialization as well as the role of transnational processes of convergence, and will carve out their importance and consequences for styles and patterns of political press coverage (see chapter 2). After a short summary (chapter 3), to facilitate the systematic comparison of national contexts and characteristics we will then expand on the country models which Hallin & Mancini (2004) developed, and will indicate the consequences and influences of national systemic context factors on patterns of political press coverage throughout the last 50 years (see chapter 4). Finally, we will assess the aspect of the normative quality of political press coverage in different points in time and different countries. We will suggest a framework of several distinct understandings of democracy and thus the different democratic quality of political reporting which can be observed in the coverage of different countries (see chapter 5).

After a detailed explanation of research questions, codebook and method (chapters 6 and 7), chapter 9 and 10 summarize the results and present the conclusion of this study.

Linking Context with Content

We have introduced the media as social institution which interacts with and rely on other institutions, generates dynamic sets of social rules and behaviors which define desired social actions and acts as mediator between the governing and the governed. We have also said that the media constitutes an environment in which political and social actors need to act. But how can we link the content, style and format of political press coverage with internal and external contextual factors which we are proposing are essential to causing characteristics, similarities and variations of the political press coverage at different times and in different countries? As Reese (2007) put it, “media phenomena have a variety of causes, and [...] within a web of interconnected forces explanation is a matter of emphasis.” (p. 38) To be able to draw coherent conclusions and thus emphasize our results in a way to provide satisfying explanations, we will elaborate on the interconnected forces and the way in which we propose they can be related to political press coverage below.

Multi-level Opportunity Structures

A multi-level approach to the relation between media content and (trans-)national context and dynamics is needed. In their overview over relevant theoretical approaches that have crystallized in the literature so far, Esser & Hanitzsch (2011) distinguish four different approaches, two of which in combination can be seen as the most satisfactory in providing a scaffolding and theoretical fundament of the empirical research ahead. These are the Discursive Opportunity Structures approach and the Structural-individualistic approach. The notion of discursive opportunity structures is based on the concept of political opportunity structures and has been mainly developed for communication studies by Ferree et al. (2002) and Koopmans & Olzak (2004) and also applied by Gerhards & Schäfer (2006) in their comparative study of media coverage of human genome research. Ferree et al. (2002) describe it as:

> part of the broader political opportunity structure [which] refers to all of the institutional and cultural access points that actors can seize upon to attempt to bring their claims into the political forum, and it has been used to explain the frequency and timing of protest events such as demonstrations and rallies. The discursive opportunity structure is limited to the framework of ideas and meaning-making institutions in a particular society. It provides a similar tool for understanding why certain actors and frames are more prominent in public discourse than others. The mass media are clearly central to this meaning-making process, but they are only a part of the institutional and cultural structures that channel and organize discourse. (p. 62)

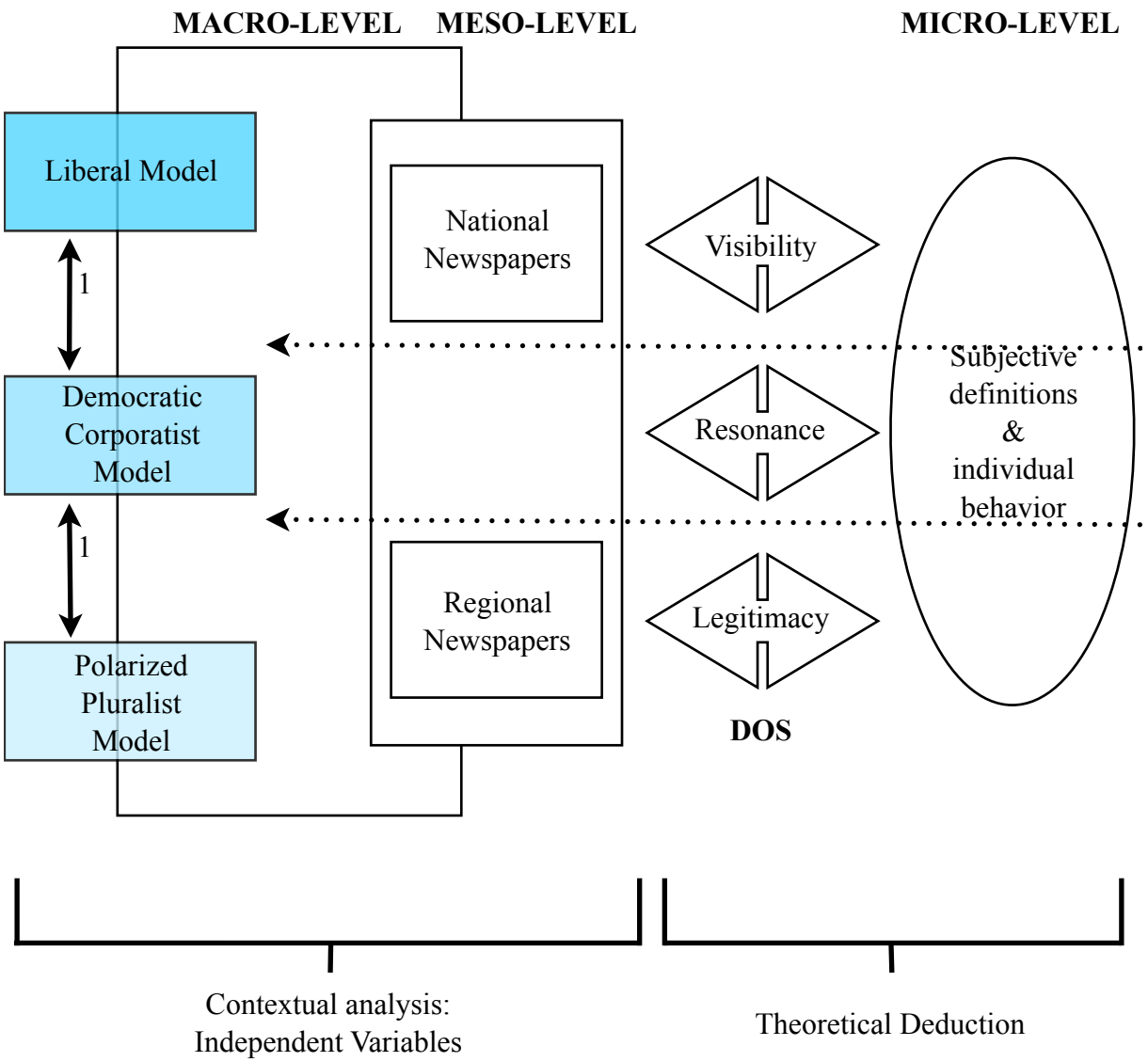
The idea of discursive opportunity structures is based on the assumption of a highly competitive public sphere, in which events and actors struggle for attention. The presence of certain discursive opportunities in turn leads to advantageous or disadvantageous behavior of media-external claim makers and to decisions about selection and character of coverage by media-internal gatekeepers. Thus the distinctive feature of this approach is its central focus on the behavioral latitude available to media actors, depending on the discursive opportunity structures (1) visibility, (2) resonance and (3) legitimacy. Claim makers and gate keepers base their actions on the context which is created by the presence of these opportunity structures. The three components of discursive opportunity structures are summarized by Ferree et al. (2002) as (1) political (e.g. judicial, state and party factors), (2) sociocultural (e.g. gender, religion and justice concepts), and (3) mass media (e.g. style, role of sources, role concepts). While it provides a very detailed link of actors` behavior and structural context, the application of this concept has until now been predominantly topical (Esser & Hanitzsch 2011).

Reinemann, on the other hand, in his structural-individualistic approach, integrates macro-, meso-, and micro-level as well as processes of transnational change into a heuristic that includes behavioral concepts on the micro-level (Reinemann & Huismann 2007), which makes this theorem the one which provides the possibly most comprehensive and integrative approach to comparative political communication research. The tenet of the structural-individualistic approach is to combine individual behavior and decisions on the micro-level with media-organizational factors on the meso-level and social situations on the macro-level. Additionally, structural change can take place on the macro-level caused by transnational dynamics which again influences processes on the meso- as well as on the micro-level. In general, all three levels are characterized by mutually influential dynamics:

> It is the basic assumption that actors will try to pursue their preferences in the most ideal way under the restrictions present in each decision situation. Their action is thereby determined by their subjective definition of an action situation. This definition in turn is dependent on the one hand on the external conditions of the situation […], on the other hand on the internal conditions of the actors, which can be located either on the level of organizations […], or on the individual level […]. The perception of external conditions means the step from the macro level of social situations into the meso- or micro-level of the actors. […] Once the `overt` action of other actors is observed, the micro-level is abandoned again, as a new social (meso- or macro-situation) [sic] is created in which actors react to one another. (Reinemann & Huismann 2007, p. 476f.)

The structural-individualistic approach therefore provides a framework which creates a link between macro-, meso-, and micro-level (including transnational dynamics) via the psychological and social embedding of individual journalists in structures on the meso- and macro-level. Socialization within and internalization of specific structures on the political and media systems level as well as the organizational structures of specific media organizations thus are integrated into individual journalistic behavior and decisions which lead to media output, i.e., in the case of the press, articles. This makes Reinemann`s model especially valuable for the present study, as a direct assessment of the internal conditions of the actors, claim makers and gate keepers alike, would require an extensive survey and/or interviews with the relevant actors which cannot be accomplished within the scope of this project. Applying the structural-individualistic approach, however, it can be hypothesized that aggregated individual beliefs and organizational performance can be observed on a national level. More specifically, we assume that this is true for journalistic role conceptions, which are typically located on the individual level but which we expect to carry over as to be observable as aggregation (which probably means in a slightly more diluted way) even in a

comparison of national political news content. We adopt a similar approach to journalistic norms which are usually ranked at the meso-level and which we still assume for a large part to be observable as aggregation in national comparison. Nonetheless, the study will also provide a closer look at the empirical indications on the meso-level of media organizations. Furthermore, the structural-individual approach can with great benefit be combined with discursive opportunity structures. While the structural-individual approach demands a dyadic empirical implementation, combining an assessment of structural characteristics via content analysis and an examination of individual characteristics using interviews or a survey, the inclusion of the concept of discursive opportunity structures allows for a non-partitioned empirical approach: The concept of discursive opportunities facilitates the deduction of the probable perception of social situations by actors. It permits an assessment of individual- and organizational-level behavior by suggesting situational discursive structures which result from macro- and meso-level influences (for example summarized as political, sociocultural and mass media factors, see Ferree et al. 2002) and which offer varying discursive possibilities to claim makers and gate keepers. The notion of discursive opportunity structures thus allows the assumption of certain probable subjective perceptions and definitions and thus actions on the side of journalists and other media actors, resulting in the expectation of specific types of content caused by specific macro- and meso-level factors which create tangible discursive opportunity structures and by that various discursive opportunities for various actors and content. In short: Macro- and meso-level factors lead to discursive opportunity structures which can be analytically deducted. These structures then enable the assumption of certain individual behavior, i.e., as a result, a certain type of political media coverage. The combination of discursive opportunity structures with the structural-individualistic approach thus allows us to formulate hypotheses regarding the content and form of political media coverage based on different macro- and meso-level factors like national context, transnational dynamics or organizational structures. Figure 1 shows a systrematic display of this process, whose structure and details we will now explicate in more detail.



1) Transnational processes of convergence

High level of mediatization

Medium level of mediatization

Low level of mediatization

Figure 1. Explanatory Framework for the Comparative Analysis of Political Media Content

Models of Political and Media Systems as Empirical Clusters of Factors

In a first step to formulate solid hypotheses, we need to carve out the environmental components relevant to the formation of political press content as defined by the concept of discursive opportunity structures and the linkages proposed by the structural-individualistic approach. These components constitute the framework for the independent variables (IVs) of the study, and as mentioned above they consist of political, sociocultural and mass media factors (which construct differing discursive opportunity structures) and the influence of these macro- and meso-factors on the individual micro-level of journalistic work. In the following two chapters we will first elaborate on the macro-layer of transnational processes of convergence, which affect national discursive opportunity structures over time and which we also assume to produce mutual influences, and thus longitudinal changes, between autonomous national journalistic cultures, norms, and role conceptions. We will in chapter three then go into detail regarding the structurally defining factors in various national context which can include, for example, available entry points into a political system, the level of corporatism present, the strength of connections between state and various institutions, or the degree of political representation of certain social or political groups. To be able to execute a study examining this number of factors on the macro-, meso- and micro-level without falling back on elaborating solely on national and individualistic idiosyncracies and simple coincidences, it was necessary to provide a thorough and reliable systemization for analysis. Unfortunately, countries are no artificial objects naturally fit for an empirical experiment like ours, but are complex, discrete political, social and historical constructs. But fortunately we can assume certain countries or country clusters to constitute examples for specific systemic political or media structures as well as for certain degrees of mediatization and transnational phenomena which we theorize to influence patterns of political media coverage. Using this approach allows for a systematized overview and empirical results which can withstand the allegation of national singularity or historical contingencies and can thus provide a solid foundation and stepping stone for future comparative political research to start from.

The scaffolding needed to systematically cluster Western democracies into empirical objects of research for cross-country and longitudinal comparison is provided by the core work of Hallin & Mancini (2004), who in *Comparing Media Systems* propose an arrangement of Western democracies (or, more specifically, their political and media systems) into three distinct models: The Liberal Model, the Democratic Corporatist Model, and the Polarized

Pluralist Model. We will use their framework to group the countries examined into systematic clusters according to their political and media context. *Comparing Media Systems* presents several structural dimensions according to which media coverage in different Western democracies can be characterized. The authors conduct a theoretical, historical analysis of the development and features of the political and media systems in various Western countries and create a typology of media systems (see table 1).[1] With this, they provide a summary of the most important historical, contextual and structural features of various media and political systems well fit as a starting point for comparative political communication research.

Table 1

Three Models of Media Systems

	Liberal or North Atlantic Model	**Democratic Corporatist or North/ Central European Model**	**Polarized Pluralist or Mediterranean Model**
Development of media markets	Early development of mass press	Early development of mass press	Dominance of elite press
Journalistic professionalism	Early professionalization; high professionalism	Early professionalization; high professionalism	Late professionalization; low professionalism
State intervention	Low state intervention	High state intervention	High state intervention
Political parallelism	Low political parallelism	Medium-high political parallelism	High political parallelism

Note. Adapted from *Comparing Media Systems*, by D. Hallin and P. Mancini, Cambridge: 2004

[1] Although the authors do refer to their typology as to one of "media systems", it actually subsumes not just different media systems but also different political systems and contexts to distinguish the three models. While the typology will in this study be referred to as typology of media systems it is important to keep this inclusion of aspects of the respective political systems in mind.

The four dimensions of media systems which form the framework for Hallin and Mancini`s typology are (1) the development of media markets, (2) the degree of political parallelism, (3) the level of journalistic professionalization and (4) the role of state intervention. Furthermore, Hallin & Mancini include five political system characteristics into their framework: (1) liberal vs. welfare state, (2) consensus vs. majoritarian government, (3) individual vs. organized pluralism, (4) moderate vs. polarized pluralism, and (5) rational-legal authority vs. clientelism. Examining numerous Western democracies historically and theoretically according to the above aspects, the authors develop their three different models of political and media systems. The three models show a geographical distribution with the Polarized Pluralist Model being most prevalent in Southern Europe (the Mediterranean), the Democratic Corporatist Model dominating in North- and Central Europe, and the Liberal Model covering mostly North America and England (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p.66ff.). This pattern makes sense as the basis for analysis is the nation state, within the borders of which the present political and media systems were developed. The authors give the following succinct description of their models in the introduction of their work (p. 11):

> The Liberal Model is characterized by a relative dominance of market mechanisms and of commercial media; the Democratic Corporatist Model by a historical coexistence of commercial media and media tied to organized social and political groups, and by a relatively active but legally limited role of the state; and the Polarized Pluralist Model by integration of the media into party politics, weaker historical development of commercial media, and a strong role of the state.

As we will later see, the four countries analyzed in this study can be classified into the Democratic Corporatist Model (Germany and Switzerland) and the Liberal Model (USA and Great Britain), which is why our attention will be focused onto these two models. We will get back to explicating the contextual details of each examined country according to their grouping within three models of media systems in chapter 4, where we will also look more closely at possible deflections from the “ideal types” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 70f.) of the models. First, however, we will complete our overview over the structure of independent variables, and will introduce longitudinal processes of change like mediatization and transnational convergence as macro-level factors of influence on discursive opportunity structures and thus on patterns of political communication coverage.

Processes of Change: The Longitudinal Aspect of Analyzing Political Press Coverage

Mediatization

Altheide & Snow introduced the concept of mediatization[2] to the study of communication in 1979. Mediatization describes the process of the media becoming increasingly autonomous from other social institutions and especially the political sphere, which in turn causes media logic to become increasingly dominant in comparison with political logic. This phenomenon is highly relevant to the present research in so far as an increasing dominance of media logic within public communication also implies a shift of discursive opportunity structures, transforming opportunities of visibility, resonance and legitimacy for media actors and assumedly modifying them in favor of media conduct and objectives. This transformation, when following Reineman`s (Reinemann & Huismann 2007) proposition of structural-individualistic relations, can be expected to directly impact patterns of political media coverage, as changes on the macro- and meso-level impact journalistic behavior on the micro-level. The concept of mediatization has recently been greatly and valuably refined with regard to political communication research (see for example Strömbäck 2008, Donges 2008 or Lundby 2009), and following we will sketch its relevance for changes in patterns of political press coverage.

Donges (2008) lists three constituents of mediatization, which give a first impression of the reasons for the impact mediatization can be assumed to have on political media coverage:
(1) growing importance of media actors in relation to political actors
(2) growing intrusion of media logic into the public sphere
(3) delinkage of the media from the political sphere
These three aspects also point out an additional dimension: Besides a growing dominance of media logic, media coverage can also be expected to become more autonomous from other areas of the public sphere, particularly in our case the political sphere.

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[2] Terms like medialization or mediazation are sometimes used synonymously. They should however not be confused with “mediation”, which simply denotes a context in which the mass media constitute the main channel of communication in any given context.

To further approach a method of applying the concept of mediatization to an analysis of media content, we turn to Schade (2004), who suggests a multidimensional concept of mediatization; he distinguishes between mediatization as occurrence, mediatization with regard to various actors (logic of mediatization on the side of the media actors and mediatization strategies on the side of political actors) and the consequences of mediatization. In other words, he proposes that mediatization can be analyzed as format-related (which requires the study of media content), as strategy of societal actors (which requires the analysis of goal-oriented behavior for example of political actors), or as effect (which requires the examination of consequences) (internal project manuscript). As the present study analyzes media content, the format-related dimension is most relevant. It draws mainly on the concept of media logic, which can be defined as

> a form of communication, the process through which media present and transmit information. Elements of this form include the various media and the formats used by these media. Format consists, in part, of how material is organized, the style in which it is presented, the focus or emphasis on particular characteristics of behavior, and the grammar of media communication. (Altheide & Snow 1991, p. ix)

More directly: Media logic describes the techniques and values media make use of in order to take advantage of their format and capture the audience`s attention– what Hallin and Mancini (2004) call the rules internal to media organizations and news content production. Various indicators of media logic have been defined in current literature, they include simplification, polarization, personalization, stereotyping, visualization and metacoverage (Strömback 2000[3], Esser & D`Angelo 2006).

Political vs. media logic. But how, more specifically, is this relevant to political press coverage? This question can be answered with a look at media logic`s systemic counterpart: political logic. Media logic means that the requirements of the media – as institutions and in a social systems perspective – take center stage and shape the means by which political communication is played out by political actors, covered by the media and understood by the people. Political logic, on the other hand, means that the needs of the political system and political institutions – such as political parties and governmental agencies as well as democracy as a normative political system – take center stage and shape how political communication is played out, covered and understood. What is important for people to know,

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[3] With translating help from the author via Frank Esser.

as interpreted mainly by political actors and institutions, takes precedence (Meyer 2002, Strömbäck 2005). Esser & Strömbäck (2009) compile the following six dimensions which political logic follows: (1) allocation of political power, (2) partisanship, (3) defining political problems and seeking solutions, (4) deliberation, compromise and authoritative decisions, (5) implementation of political solutions and (6) accountability of those involved in political decision-making. This means, political communication in a particular society can, to a significant extent, be either governed mainly by political or by media logic (Mazzoleni 1987, Meyer 2002) and we can thus assume that mediatization is increasing in all four examined countries but less so in countries where political logic is still relatively strong.
Thus, political actors need to take into account the growing importance of media logic in their communication, while also having to take political logic into account regarding their actions (Meyer 2002). This can lead to tension between media and political logic - political actors need to be held responsible for their actions, and the process of political decision-making is not always compatible with features of media logic. In this confrontation of two different kinds of logic governing political communication in the public sphere and thus also political media coverage, the well-known fear of shrinking democratic quality of political media coverage and even a negative impact of this coverage on politics itself is again mirrored. However, this notion often relies on the assumption that currently present phenomena possess two specific characteristics: They denote a deterioration of the status quo, and they are unidirectionally becoming worse over time - as exemplified in the notion of the "golden age of journalism" long gone and heavily missed by many scholars, audience members and even journalists themselves. We will address the matter of democratic quality in more detail in chapter six, but we will first direct our attention to the question if mediatization can be seen at all as unilateral process.

Mediatization as a dynamic process. Current political communication research largely agrees on the fact that mediatization is not a unilinear or one-directional process, but can vary depending on the strength and role of political institutions (Bennett et al. 2003, Entman 2004), across time and related to the political situation. In times of war, for example, there is a strong tendency for the media to "rally `round the flag" and accept the precedence of politics over the media (Carruthers 2000, Allan & Zelizer 2004). Also, strongly commercial outlets which can be assumed to be more strongly oriented towards media logic, often coexist

with party-affiliated newspapers or public service broadcasting (Hallin & Mancini 2004). The general assumption is that systems have gone from being politically-centered to being media-dominated, that the process of mediatization and the relevance of media over political logic has become stronger over time. But it is possible that different institutions in a society are more or less mediatized, depending on, for example, their power base or institutional strengths, and the purpose for which they were created. The institutional setting is important here (Cook 2006, Hallin & Mancini 2004): Some institutions are supposed to be responsive to public opinion, and they will arguably be more vulnerable to the mediatization of politics than institutions that are not supposed to be responsive to public opinion. It is also relevant if and to what extent mediatization is considered problematic in any given country, as the mediatization of politics might partly be dependent on political decisions regarding state regulation of the media (Esser & Strömbäck 2009). Another aspect that might play a role regarding the relevance of mediatization are the political beliefs of the citizens, as strong political beliefs might weaken its impact as they lessen the need for orientation via the media (McCombs 2004) and enable the citizens to be more selective (Zaller 1992, McCombs 2004). Studies have shown the importance of electoral systems (Norris 2004) as well as party-focus (King 2002) for the style and content of political media coverage; countries with stronger political parallelism and an important role of political parties can thus be expected to be less mediatized.

On the other hand, as especially with relation to the press the commercialization of media systems has indeed shown to be a relevant factor for political media coverage, it is also conceivable that the strength and relevance of political beliefs is increased through dramatization and polarization – the formation of openly partisan media outlets like FOX News in the US could be seen as an example of this kind of development.[4] Mediatization thus needs to be conceptualized as a dynamic process, which also allows us to investigate and assess the degree of mediatization across time and space. Politics in modern postindustrial democracies is mediated and probably mediatized, and that the degree of mediatization is among other things depending on the specific political context. However, mediatization, while understood as process, is dynamic and by no means unilinear. For this reason, Krotz (2003)

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[4] With regard to broadcast media, state intervention of course also plays an important role for political media output and the degree of mediatization.

even argues that mediatization has to be understood as metaprocess "because, simply said, it is too broad, too complex, too essential and too long-lasting a phenomenon." (p. 10) We agree, however, with Donges (2008), who examined the mediatization of political organizations. He argues that understanding mediatization as a metaprocess is helpful in theoretically grasping its complexity but should not prevent scholars from proposing empirically assessable predications about the interrelations between the many aspects inherent in mediatization. And in this study we will take him at heart, conducting an assessment of the process of mediatization, its dynamic and its interconnectedness with features of media and political systems. However, with view on the above explicated ambivalence regarding the manifest consequences of mediatization in media content, we first want to go one step further in our theoretical analysis of mediatization by proposing two distinct facets of media logic; this step is inspired by the common assumption of an ongoing process of international homogenization of political press coverage - how so, we will explicate below.

As with mediatization, processes of transnational influence and convergence are often perceived as more or less unilinear, taking place from more mediatized countries towards less mediatized countries - a good example for this perception is the term "Americanization", which for some time has been used as almost synonymous for new media trends in European democracies. However, just as mediatization can lead to widely varying characteristics in political media coverage, depending on different contexts, so can transnational processes of convergence - depending from which context to which new environment they are transferred. This, we argue, can be made more visible and better traceable by identifying two distinct facets of media logic, namely professional and commercial logic.

Professional and Commercial Logic

> In a 2009 essay on the future of journalism, Dan Hallin states
>
> The assumption is usually that that world media are converging toward a liberal system more or less like the system that prevails in the United States, dominated by commercial media and by a professional culture oriented toward information consumers, factual reporting, political independence and the objectivity norm. (p. 332)

With this, he refers not only to commercial logic, but mentions one more component of the highly mediatized US system: professional culture. We view this as a very valuable approach to the concept of mediatization and media logic, especially with regard to the conflicted consequences often associated with it: On the one hand, a commercial orientation geared

towards the greatest possible revenue based on consumer attraction and disregard of any democratic responsibilities, and on the other hand a growing importance of objective reporting and political autonomy which supports the idea of a free, unbiased press contributing to a functional democracy. Thus, we propose a view of media logic as integrating two diverse components: Commercial and professional logic. This also expands our current hypothesizing as follows: Mediatization as well as commercialization and professionalization are increasing in all four countries but less so in countries where political logic is still relatively strong.

Media logic pertains to the rules that are crucial for attaining media`s basic goals like publishing on time, reaching a large enough audience to survive, and conveying specific information to said audience in an effective way (and this is true for all media, quality and tabloid, to a certain extent). Simplification (which can include polarization, personalization and stereotypization), negativism and visualization are strategies which media can use to reach these basic aims – too complicated, abstract and irrelevant stories will never reach any larger audience. Thus it is the media`s task to simplify "reality", to break it down to a level understandable within the timeframe of reading, say, one page of a newspaper, and to concentrate on these events which might signal danger or demand specific attention – event naturally more likely to be negative than positive. In his study on post-modern news logic, Lengauer (2007) suggests the assessment of this coverage characteristic via the the examination of the coverage of positive vs. negative events. However, as is the case with the present study, if the details of the covered events are not known to the researchers, an assessment of the tone of articles can be preferred. While this prohibits a detailed analysis of a possible change from negativism as coverage of negative events towards more commercially oriented negativism as negative coverage of events, it nonetheless allows for measuring the general increase of negativity in political media coverage. The additional assessment of the use of competence-frames moreover provides one more indicator of the character of negativity in media coverage, while furthermore creating a link of negative coverage to the respective distance between media and politics.

The above mentioned processes are necessary for the media to fulfill their basic function of mediating information to the public, and by themselves do not have to be detrimental for

democracy or political processes in general. However, if the level of economic pressure is rising and commercial success is becoming increasingly important or even the most important objective of a media outlet, this can result in an expansion of already existing features of media logic and extending them from their use to convey information in an effective way to reaching an audience as large as possible as first and foremost goal. The number of visuals is increased, negativism is inflated to become scandalism, and simplicity of the information provided is escalated: International coverage, which is less directly relevant according to news factors and which is under all circumstances less easily understandable than domestic coverage, is cut; more trivial issues are covered since they mean less effort in simplification, and events are if possible broken down to the level of individual people to provide a clearer reference for the reader and to avoid the explanation of complex abstract structures. Furthermore, a larger audience can be reached either by staying very neutral or by being very partisan – the former providing the largest group which will not be offended by the coverage, the latter providing the largest and safest group which will definitely support the coverage. Now the once innocuous and requisite patterns of media logic have turned to reflect not simple media necessity, maybe even for the greater good of conveying political information, but commercial greed. Growing commercialization can start to push aside professional aspects of media logic in favor of commercial aspects of media logic.

Professional logic, on the other hand, starts to develop with a field`s desire for autonomy and critical acclaim as independent domain, characterized by its own professional rules and standards. Hallin & Mancini (2004) refer to a comparatively broad definition of journalistic professionalization as existing "where journalism is developed as a distinct field with significant autonomy from other social fields, including the political field." (p. 38) Growing journalistic professionalism for example can emphasize the anglo-American standards of detached, neutral and objective reporting - seeking independence from political influences - as well as a growing focus on analysis instead of events - providing an additional, professional service of analytically structuring events instead of simply retelling them. These aspects of professional logic can then be expected to result in a greater prominence of pro-contra-structured media pieces as well as an increase in metacoverage, which constitutes a new possibility for the display of adherence to professional standards via self-referential and self-critical coverage.

Both commercial and professional logic have been addressed frequently though indirectly in the literature, namely in connection with commercialization and professionalization - Lengauer (2007) for example lists these as two processes crucial to explaining the transformation of political communication. However, while it is simple to define commercialization and professionalization as an increase of commercial respectively professional logic in the sphere of political communication, the discrimination between effects of professional and commercial logic does not present itself as an easy task. And indeed, there exists an effective proximity of both constructs, among other things owed to the fact that media organizations are at once economic and professional organizations – and both economic and professional objectives can lead to standards which not only expand the practical parameters of media logic, but also disobey rules of political logic. Commercial logic does so with the goal of reaching higher profits.In other words, both processes, professionalization and commercialization, sometimes seem very similar, based on the fact that certain professional rules of journalism (i.e. concerning the readability of stories) of course also facilitate newspaper sales. The journalist eventually has one goal in common with the media enterprise: to reach the audience. However, the professional goal of the journalist is to communicate information to the audience, while the media corporation is ultimately responsible for generating profit through reaching the audience. Following, we will take a more detailed look at both concepts and their applicability to and benefits for empirical analysis. Table 2 gives a focused overview over the content indicators and their motivations for media, professional and commercial logic found in literature which we will also discuss in the following subchapters.

Table 2

Commercial vs. Professional Logic

Indicators	**Media logic**	**Professional logic**	**Commercial logic**
Short stories (*simplification*)	-	-	Faster production & accessibility
Visualization (*simplification*)	Relevance, comprehensibility	-	*Increased* relevance, accessibility; curiosity; easier interpretation
Sensationalism (*simplification*)	-	-	Relevance
Emotionality (*simplification*)	-	-	*Increased* relevance, curiosity
Personalization	Relevance, reference	-	*Increased* relevance, reference
Negativism	Relevance, control (need to react)	Media as watchdog, exposure	Curiosity, schadenfreude, fear
Criticism towards the government	-	Media as watchdog, control, exposure	Polarization, emotionality, increased relevance
Scandalization	-		Curiosity, schadenfreude, fear
Metacoverage	(praise)	Self-reference, importance of the media	-
Objectivity	-	Media as neutral informant, mediator	Reach larger audience
Partisan coverage	-	*see analysis-focused coverage*	Reach more dedicated audience, relevance
Neutral coverage	-	*see objectivity*	Reach larger audience
Analysis-focused reporting	-	Media as provider of necessary analysis & background	-
Opinionated reporting	-	Media as political commentator, provider of interpretation	Polarization, emotionality, increased relevance
Journalistic initiative, suggestion & demands	-	Media as political commentator, mouthpiece of the people	-
Diversity	-	Inclusion & representation	-
Narrative reporting	-	-	Increased personal relevance, emotionality, easier interpretation, accessibility

Note. Indicators in italics signify multidimensional concepts, however as some indicators double in two or more concepts, the respectively important subordinate indicators are explicitly listed as well. For more details see method chapter.

Commercialization. Commercialization is defined by McQuail (2000) as "a process by which media structures and contents come to reflect the profit-seeking goals of media industries and are governed by market considerations" (p. 492). In some contexts it is also referred to as boulevardization or tabloidization.[5] Commercialization is often linked to a convergence towards the Liberal Model, as it has

> […] weakened the ties between the media and the world of organized political actors that distinguished the Democratic Corporatist and Polarized Pluralist from the Liberal system, and has encouraged the development of a globalized media culture that substantially diminishes national differences in media system. (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p. 282)

This statement precisely articulates not just the already mentioned juxtaposition (and assumed opposition) of media and political logic, but also describes the close connection seen between the surge of media logic and the emergence of a globally analog character of media coverage. We will examine this connection in a later chapter, but will first take a closer look at the character of commercialization or the growing importance of commercial media logic.
At a general level, it can be argued that the media in democratic countries are always positioned somewhere between the political system and the economic system (Croteau & Hoynes 2001, Hallin & Mancini 2004). The political system forms the institutional and regulatory boundaries within which the media is required to operate, whereas the markets and the dynamics between supply and demands shape what it is possible for commercial media enterprises to do in order to survive or be profitable (McManus, 2004). In differentiation to economization ("Ökonomisierung") which is sometimes used interchangeably to commercialization in German-speaking literature, Siegert (2005) defines commercialization as the increasing influence of advertising revenue and consumer orientation on media production, content and reception.

There are two opposite theories regarding the reasons of commercialization: While the readership theory argues that a decline in readership caused a stronger media orientation towards what the audience wants (a bottom to top-development), the stockholder theory suggests that the public ownership of publicly traded newspapers causes newspapers to orient

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[5] Other definitions focus on the commercialization of media organizations or institutions in terms of advertising revenue, spending or degree of public financing (sometimes also referred to as economization).

themselves towards Wall Street instead of public service (a top-down-development). But regardless which approach is preferred, with concern of the structure of discursive opportunities, the legitimacy of characteristics of commercial logic increases with commercialization. These concrete indicators of commercialization are listed as shorter stories and more visuals (Hallin 2000), resistance and opposition towards the government (Esser 1998), sensationalism, trivialization, a decrease in international coverage, the exploitation of fear, scandalization, personalization (Hallin & Mancini 2004) and a growing occurrence of strategy frames. Commercial logic is thus often understood as commercial instrumentalization of media coverage, limiting the freedom of the press and threatening professionalism. One exception might be the speculation that high commercial orientation leads to increased neutrality due to the effort of reaching a greater audience by withholding statements which could scare a certain group of readers away. In this case, an aspect of commercial logic would be neatly in line with professional media logic based on the American standard of objectivity. But it seems that this expectation has been dispelled. As Hallin (2009) puts it,

> Partisan media has re-emerged, most notably in talk radio, cable television and the blogosphere. One assumption that lay behind the convergence hypothesis was the idea that commercialization would lead inevitably to political neutrality. But this is clearly false; depending on the structure of media markets and on the political culture in which they operate, partisanship may be a viable or even an essential business strategy. (p. 333)

This supports our assumption that commercially viable strategies will differ depending on the (national) context, which increases the importance of an awareness of the close linkage between commercial and professional strategies as equal components of media logic and underlines the relevance of macro-level, systemic influences on the character of national media coverage. But can we say the same regarding professionalization?

Professionalization. In occupational sociology, professionalization expresses "the transition process from an occupation to a profession" (Blöbaum 2006, p. 227). This process is coupled with a rise in qualifications, prestige and salary and includes autonomization, specialization and the obligation for academic training. Medical doctors, lawyers or professors are traditional examples for members of specific professions – they are already professionalized, so to say. Regarding journalism, in the words of Blöbaum (2006), there is "often a trend towards professionalization stated although not all attributes of a traditional

profession are present." (p. 227) Still journalists are more likely to identify with the occupation of journalism than with the news organization they work in (Russo 1998). Hallin & Mancini (2004) include journalistic professionalization into their four dimensions of media systems which they suggest influence media coverage, but while the professionalization of journalism[6] is mentioned frequently in media studies, detailed definitions are rare. Deuze (2005) therefore refers to professionalism in journalism as "journalistic ideology" (p. 445) which is a much better defined and researched concept, and lists five categories which constitute journalistic ideology: (1) Public service, (2) objectivity, (3) autonomy, (4) immediacy and (5) ethics. Deuze (2005) explains,

> the 20th century history of the professionalization of journalism can be typified by the consolidation of a consensual occupational ideology among journalists in different parts of the world. Conceptualizing journalism as an ideology […] primarily means understanding journalism in terms of how journalists give meaning to their newswork. […][J]ournalists in elective democracies share similar characteristics and speak of similar values in the context of their daily work, but apply these in a variety of ways to give meaning to what they do. (p. 444f.)

In other words, the way in which journalists give meaning to their work is dependent to a large degree on the context in which they work, and hence not just on meso-level organizational structures but also on systemic structures on the macro-level. Here, we can link back to Reinemann`s (Reinemann & Huismann 2007) structural-individualistic model, which supports the same setting with regard to journalistic work: Journalistic ideology is rooted in the allocation of meaning to their work by journalistic actors, who in turn act based on subjective cognition and definition of situations. And these subjective definitions in turn are dependent on the external and internal conditions of the situation - for which national and historical context plays a crucial role. In other words, how a journalist gives meaning to her work depends, among other things, also on the historical role given to journalism in her country - a historical tradition of journalists as political commenters will make for a different professional ideology than a historical tradition of journalists as neutral informants. This setting supports our assumption that professionally valid strategies will differ depending on the (national) context, and it introduces the possibility of similar strategies being defined as professionally motivated in one country, while viewed as purely commercial in another.

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[6] In the context of this paper, "professionalization" means the process towards "professionalism" – in existing literature, both terms are often used interchangeably and will be quoted accordingly.

In his essay on professionalization and commercialization, Hallin (2000) gives an overview over the development of professionalization in the US:

> The professionalization of journalism was part of a general trend, beginning in the Progressive Era, away from partisan politics as basis for public life, and towards conceptions of administrative rationality and neutral expertise. […] The journalist was supposed to serve the public as a whole […]. The ideology of public service was connected with the notion of objectivity, the faith that it was possible to report events from a non-political and non-sectarian standpoint, relying on neutral criteria of newsworthiness to make the inevitable choices media gatekeepers must make. (p. 220)

He recounts that professionalism was most widespread during the time after WWII, which was dominated by a very active citizenry (Putnam 1995), political consensus, public trust in political authority as well as a belief in neutral expertise. In comparison to the modernist movement in arts and literature, he calls this era the "high modernism" in American journalism. But the first thing that often comes to mind when talking about professionalism (and which is often used almost synonymously) is formal training. Due to the specific form of journalistic professionalism, however, Hallin & Mancini (2004) argue, in line with Deuze (2005) that the correlation between formal education and journalistic professionalism is a weak one. More relevant for the professionalization taking place in media contexts, they claim, are the evolvement of

(1) an ideology of public service, which is closely linked with the development of mechanisms of self-regulation

(2) autonomy, which means not only autonomy from state intervention but especially internal autonomy regarding the definition of criteria for newsworthiness

(3) distinct professional norms, which include objectivity, immediacy and ethics.

Today, Hallin (2000) states, the heyday of journalistic professionalism is over, leaving the time span of the second half of the 20th century as most characterized by journalistic professionalism. Current American journalism instead is characterized by changes through commercialization as well as political and cultural changes:

> The consensus of Cold War, liberalism and the faith in political authority that went with it were broken by Vietnam, Watergate, [and] the struggles over race and gender […]. First, it undermined the credibility of `objective journalism` and pushed the media towards more interpretive forms of reporting. Second, it left journalists with a problem of how to position themselves: were they insiders or outsiders? (Hallin 2000, p. 226)

Weaver et al. (2007) similarly conclude from their studies on US journalist during the last 30 years that professionalism in American journalism is at best stable and express concern over

"threats to journalists` autonomy, […]disengagement from professional culture, and […]the declining importance of some aspects of the analytical role." (Beam, Weaver & Brownlee 2007, p. 295) In addition, the institutions of journalism in the US are weak, with low membership of professional organizations or unions. In comparison, journalist unions and professional organizations in Germany, Switzerland and Great Britain register high membership (Esser & Hemmer 2008, Newspaper Society 2006[7]).[8] So the question is, if this assessment is also true for countries aside from North America. Has journalistic professionalism gone the same way and taken on the same forms in Germany and Switzerland? What about the liberal sibling of the US, Great Britain?

Witschge & Nygren (2009) claim that professionalism in British and Swedish journalism is decreasing due to commercialization and a growing diversity of media content, on the other hand, European journalism is often characterized as still traversing the process of professionalization (e.g. Blöbaum 2000, Blum 2005). A main reason for this ambiguity concerning the perception of the degree and implementation of professionalization in journalism can be identified as a lack of consensus regarding the character and avail of journalistic professionalization. As Hallin & Mancini (2004) put it, there is a dissension in literature as well as public perception of journalistic professionalism which can be summarized in the bisection between "mere ideology" vs. "pure altruism" (p. 36). Grounded in Siebert, Peterson and Schramm`s (1956) social responsibility theory of the press, features of professionalism are seen by some as instrument of public service and social responsibility, facilitating self-regulation, legitimation and resistance against external pressures to shape media content (Bennett 2001, Hallin 2000, Deuze 2005). Opposed to this view and rooted more strongly in critical and cultural theory, journalistic professionalization is described as, in the best case, a strategic aid to deal with newsroom demands most effectively (Tuchman 1978), in the worst case a mere feint of public responsibility or service (Pauly 1988). In this case, the professionalization of journalism is actually seen as supporting

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[7] http://www.newspapersoc.org.uk/

[8] One reason for this can be found in the fact that at least in Germany and Switzerland, press cards for identification and accreditation especially for official events can only be obtained through membership in a union or another professional organization.

the existing power structures by assuming a normative hierarchy of different forms of coverage or content (Entman 2003, Graber 1993, McDonald 2000, Gamson 1999). This dichotomy is additionally supported by a different conception of the role and relevance of objectivity in media reporting in North America and Europe. Objectivity as a reporting norm is strongly rooted in the American context, whereas European journalism has a history as political commentary valuing opinion and interpretation. What Barnhurst & Mutz (1997) describe as a recent trend in American journalism, namely that "journalists now supply a context of social problems, interpretations, and themes" (p. 27) instead of just reporting on pure events, can be seen as a longstanding tradition in European journalism and thus as one of the journalistic norms which need to be included in the discussion of professionalization. While Barnhurst and Mutz name market conditions as well as increasing respectability and status of the profession as possible causes for a shift in US journalism towards less event-centered and more analysis-focused coverage, they also add that "the new long journalism reflects a larger cultural transformation" (p. 51). We argue that this transformation might not be just rooted in a change of values and attitudes in the US, but might rather be the result of transnational processes of mutual influence between the media of different countries. In a similar way in which the standard of objectivity is assumed to have gradually transferred to European journalism it can be assumed that the European view of journalism as interpretation and contextualization of as well as commentary on political events is leaving its impact in the US media, too. We thus hypothesize that analytic instead of event-centered reporting is becoming more common in all four countries.

One more important aspect about commercialization and professionalization is their perception as catalyst for processes of transnational convergence and homogenization: Both commercial and professional logic are part of mediatization, which is assumed to be taking place internationally (if in varying stages). Thus, the process of mediatization is at the same time assumed to support a transnational convergence of media coverage patterns, which is commonly perceived as negative development. We will now examine further not only why this is the case, but also in how far this trend can be seen as coincidental national or as reciprocal global phenomenon.

Transnational Processes of Convergence

The fear of homogenization. The assumption of a general convergence of media systems worldwide towards an increasingly homogenous character of media coverage predominates much of the discourse on comparative political media research. To a large part, this is due to the fact that this process of homogenization is associated with increasing commercialization of political coverage, which in turn fuels certain fears or suspicions about the quality of political media coverage with regard to the functions media is supposed to fulfill in democracy. Patterson (1993) summarizes many of these suspicions in his examination of American election coverage, and following studies and books have applied his concerns to European election campaigns and the resulting media coverage – with mixed results. In Germany, for example, Pfetsch (1996) finds a growing integration of entertainment and political information, Semetko & Schoenbach (2003) confirm growing negativity as do Schulz & Zeh (2005), who also point out a growing dominance of strategy frames, personalization and dramatization. In a meta-analysis, Schulz et al. (2005) find an increase in conflict and scandal but their analysis refutes the common conception of a resulting voter cynicism, while Wilke & Reinemann`s (2001) analysis of German and US campaign coverage does not affirm any trends towards increased personalization or negative reporting. Strömbäck & Dimitrova (2006) compare Swedish and US election coverage and find less strategy frames in Sweden, while Esser & D`Angelo`s (2006) comparative analysis on meta-coverage in US, British and German election campaigns detects a slight predominance of metacoverage and strategy frames in the US, however closely followed by German coverage and generally characterized by smaller differences between the three countries than usually expected. While election coverage as the media coverage most directly related to political processes continues to stand at the center of research concerning the quality of media discourse, the fears related to the assumed homogenization and changes taking place have transferred to political media coverage in general, as well. In a comparison of French and US political media coverage for example, which is based on the typology of Hallin & Mancini (2004), Benson & Hallin (2007) analyze the occurrence of criticism and strategic coverage (among others) in French and American newspapers (surprisingly, they find more critical coverage and more strategy frames in French coverage). Numerous research examining political news coverage in Britain finds a decline of political news content (Rooney 2000, Negrine 1998),

whereas McLachlan & Golding (2000) on the other hand, find no change. Nonetheless, all these studies are based on the assumption that the structure of institutionalized rules in political media coverage nowadays is less national and more dynamic and globally influenced.

External and internal forces of convergence: Americanization, globalization and modernization. The phenomena of homogenization of political media coverage has also informed theoretical debate and deliberation. Pfetsch (2006) summarizes Americanization, globalization and modernization as the three "meta topics of research in political communication" (p. 67), and Lengauer (2007) calls them "theoretic explanatory models for the transformation of political communication (p. 27).[9] While often mentioned in the same breath and frequently not specifically differentiated from each other, these three explanatory approaches to transnational dynamics can be distinguished on two levels: regarding their focus on external vs. internal forces of convergence and regarding their integration of processes of transnational influence (see Figure 2).

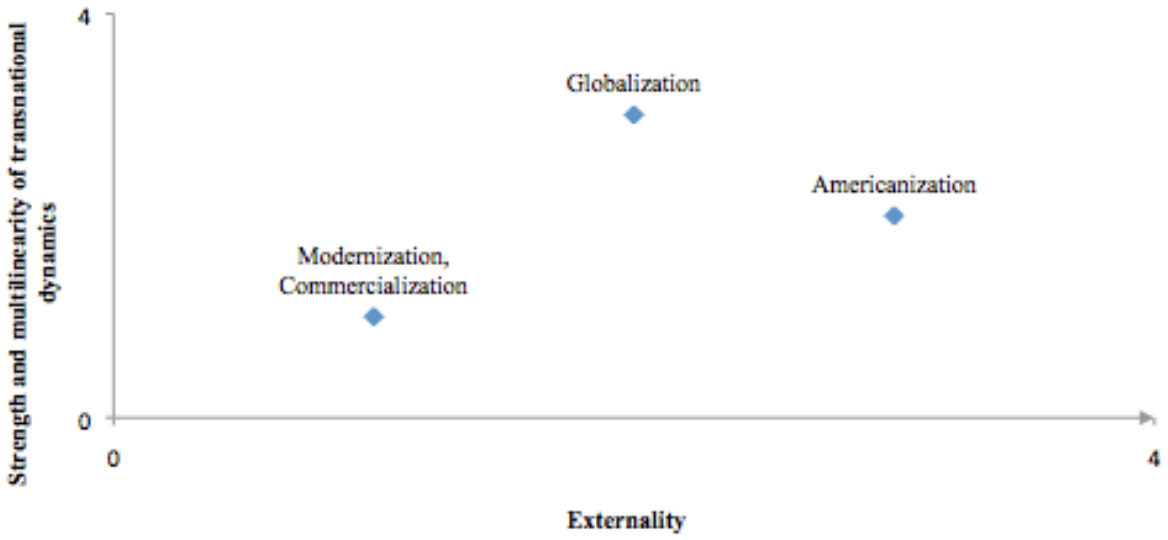

Figure 2. Explanatory Concepts of Convergence

[9] Lengauer also includes commercialization and professionalization in this list.

To describe the three concepts in short,

(1) Americanization describes the one-directional adoption of American forms and content-characteristics of media coverage in Western European countries. This concept, however, has recently been largely criticized by media scholars (Plasser 2000, Pfetsch 2006, Benson & Hallin 2007, Hallin 2009) and has mostly been replaced by assumptions of multilinear influence. Plasser (2000) for example divides Americanization into processes of adoption and shopping-processes which take place in European democracies; the former resulting in an exact adoption of US formats and styles, the latter resulting in the hybridization of media styles and formats: Techniques absorbed from the US are in this case adapted to fit the national political and systemic context – a hybrid form of media content is created.

(2) Globalization assumes the global convergence of national news standards and styles due to the facilitation of access and production via global developments and increasing transnational communication. It so to say includes the idea of Americanization (Hallin & Mancini 2003), but without the hierarchical tendencies or its unilinearity (Pfetsch & Esser 2003).

(3) Modernization focuses on the general secularization and differentiation of political and media systems worldwide. It assumes an overall, long-lasting process of change in modern Western democracies which takes place more or less naturally (Mancini & Swanson 1996) and is most visible in the most modernized, media-centered democracy of the USA.

In their description of models of political and media systems, Hallin & Mancini (2004) apply the notion of modernization to explain processes of convergence (and, possibly, divergence). They define modernization as “a move towards increased differentiation of the media from other social institutions” (p. 287) which is especially pronounced in the Liberal Model. Mediatization thus goes hand in hand with a general process of change in the field of political media coverage, which can be attributed to different types of causes: It can be viewed as either modernization (internal cause), Americanization (unilinear shopping) or globalization (increasing global homogeneity), or as a mix of all three. Hence these three processes describe on the one hand in which way mediatization is taking place, and on the other hand, due to which causes it is taking place. Both are closely linked, since research often needs to detract the cause of certain changes through the indicators of these changes: I.e. if studies find more

dramatization in political media coverage, and dramatization is seen as something inherently American, then dramatization can be described as Americanization.

Americanization, modernization, and globalization as well as professional and commercial logic are all defined by the interpretation of their causes and by the definition of their indicators (two things which function hand in hand). Thus it is incredibly important that these interpretations and definitions are based on a thorough and detailed knowledge and inclusion of the context in which they are taking place - this is in line with the above described subjective and contextual definitions of the meaning of journalists` work as well as the varieties of viable commercial strategies in different countries. Partisan reporting, while defined on the same content indicators, might mean professional logic in Germany and commercial logic in the US, while for personalization it might be vice versa. There are certainly also some indicators which are the same at all places and times, however it is important to be aware of the fact that these processes can only be interpreted within their context. That mediatization is taking place, nobody will deny, but to find out if it is fueled by external or internal forces, and to examine to which extent it is replacing political logic, it is necessary to thoroughly look at the historical, social and political context of political press coverage in various countries. This is as luck has it possible at the current point in time, when mediatization is still in process and there is still an acute awareness of different national reporting styles. It is also only possible by employing comparative political communication research to recognize the possibilities of different causes, effects and meanings of the same type of coverage characteristic.

Commercial and professional logic in the light of transnational convergence. To make the above argument more clear, we will following take a look at how professional and commercial logic can be seen in the light of transnational processes of convergence. Both types of logic can at times seem very similar since the adaptation of "foreign" practices which seem beneficial either in a professional or in a commercial way obscure the two separate processes. Thus, a generalized statement like „everything is becoming more commercialized" or „journalists are becoming more professional" does not hold up under comparative scrutiny. Sometimes, coverage is a mix of both of these things, and sometimes these two developments can look completely different in two different countries: To a US journalist, presenting both

sides of a story equally is a way to be more professional; to a German journalist, presenting both sides of a story equally is something "modern", which she adapted from the US, and the "original" professional norm is to research and investigate the viewpoints that are part of a news story and then present an analyzed picture with weighted viewpoints (instead of equal viewpoints) to the audience. To an US-journalist, this way of presenting a story might seem more commercial, garnering emotions or fighting for one party or the other. But presenting things equally can also be seen as more commercial, allowing to reach more people and not as likely angering any social party.[10]

And while processes of mutual adaptation of strategies and patterns of political media coverage might eventually lead to a homogeneous coverage in several countries, they might also lead to divergences during the process and do not legitimate the conclusion that the countries` media coverage is employing the same strategies with the same purposes. Analytic reporting might still be mainly seen as biased in the US, since the traditional American journalistic standards are based on the practice of equality and neutrality, but it might be seen as good journalistic work in Germany, where the tradition of the journalist as commenter on social proceedings has a long history and it is expected that journalists favor one party over another, depending on their analysis. Besides investigating the general dichotomy of event- vs. analysis-focus in political press coverage (Barnhurst & Mutz 1997), another pattern which indicates analytic reporting within political press coverage, based on the research experiences of several different colleagues, is the use of context-frames, which were first introduced with the distinction between thematic and episodic frame by Iyengar (1991) and first applied as "contextual frame" by Strömbäck & Dimitrova (2006). Additionally, the application of strategic framing should also be taken into account, as it indicates strategical analysis, although it can also imply a certain commercial objective to render coverage more suspenseful, as Patterson (1993) suggests with the distinction between game (i.e. strategy) and substance schemes (i.e. frames).

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[10] One could even go so far to say that presenting two or more viewpoints equally at all costs might harm democracy as it causes the audience to presume equality between two arguments or parties where there is none.

As another example, reporting on the personality of the US president might be seen as useful and normal in the US, since the person of the president is actually politically relevant as his/ her character can make a political difference. In German political coverage however, the adoption of reporting on personality traits of politicians is an adoption of practices seen in the more "modern" US which does not make much sense with regard to German politics. Gideon & Tamir (2007) provide a very useful bisection of the notion of personalization into personalization (what we also refer to as "individualization", see also Wattenberg 1998), meaning a focus on politicians instead of on parties, and privatization, describing an emphasis on the private life and personal, non-politics related traits of a politician (for a similar assessment, see Sigelmann & Bullock 1991). In the present study, we modified this concept to differentiate not just between politicians and parties but rather between individual politicians and political institutions, as to include possible relevant political institutions aside from parties. This also allows us to distinguish between two forms of personalization which hold differing commercial emphasis and enable a more detailed examination of possible slight differences of one indicator in various countries. This is another way to take into account that commercial and professional indicators cannot be perceived the same in any two countries or at any two points in time - they depend on the perception of the journalists adopting them and, by that, on the national, historical and organizational context. By bringing content and context together, we will however try to define certain of these characteristics as rooted in professional rules or commercial incentives in a specific country at a specific time. To enable this thorough examination of the interdependencies of national context, processes of mediatization, transnational processes of convergence and patterns of political press coverage, we will utilize Hallin & Mancini`s (2004) three models of media systems as empirical clusters of factors to systemize the countries examined and to allow for generalized, instead of purely idiosyncratic, conclusions. The political press coverage of the US, Great Britain, Germany and Switzerland will be analyzed as stand-in for different systemic types of macro-contexts, not just concerning political, state and sociocultural factors, but also with regard to levels of mediatization and the influence of transnational processes of convergence. In the following chapters we will give a detailed analysis of relevant context factors of different systemic environments with the help of four concrete Western democracies, and will provide interpretations and hypotheses with regard to the contextual factors` influence on political press content in general as well as on the above explicated indicators of processes of

mediatization and convergence. First, however, we present a summary of the hitherto mentioned factors of influence (i.e. empirically speaking the independent variables), their interrelationship and their expected impact on patterns of political press coverage (which will later constitute the dependent variables).

Summary: Influential Factors, Resulting Logics and Consequential Patterns of Political Media Coverage

We have until now introduced three levels on which content and style of political media coverage is defined and which are linked in a close mutually influential interrelationship: The systemic macro-level, the organizational meso-level, and the individual micro-level. Furthermore, we have identified transnational, longitudinal processes of convergence expected between Western democracies over the last decades, and have referred to the logics governing media coverage which result from these various forces in combination with growing mediatization. We assume that these various factors form clusters of influential factors on political press coverage, differing with time and context as the structure of discursive opportunities creating media coverage patterns changes with the relevance of different influences and the coverage logics pertaining to them. A systemic depiction of this process can be seen in Figure 3. We propose that the impact of mediatization and longitudinal processes of convergence in combination with national systemic characteristics like the political and media system and the understanding of democracy present as well as with organizational features and subjective perceptions and behaviors on the individual journalistic level combined provide a comprehensive explanation of patterns of political press coverage in different Western democracies throughout different decades. They form the independent variables of the present study, while the consequential patterns of coverage constitute their dependent counterparts.

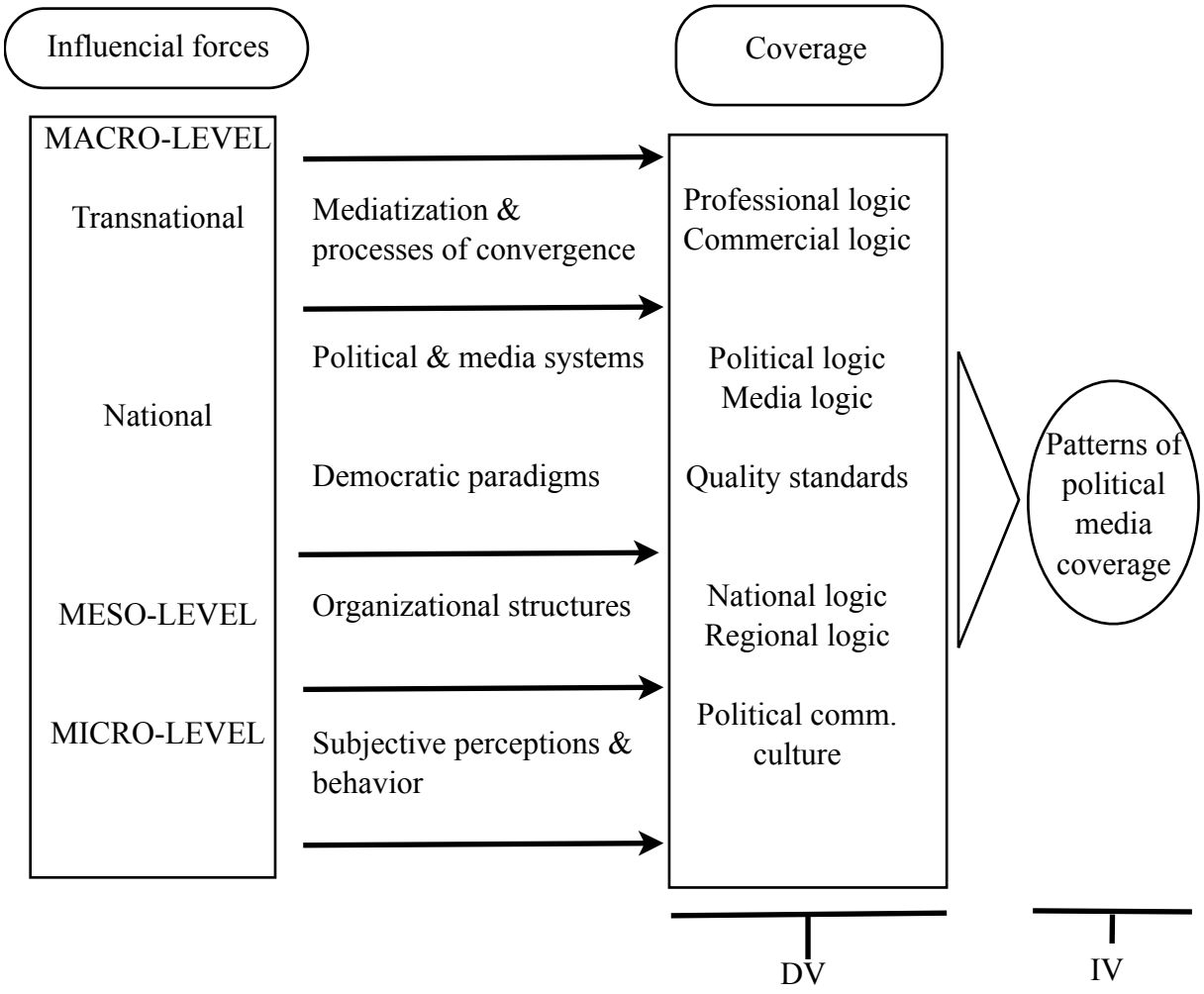

Figure 3. Systemic Flow of Influences on Political Media Coverage Patterns

In the next chapter, we will examine relevant national, organizational and individual contextual characteristics and their interaction with the forces of mediatization and transnational convergence; first however we will provide an overview over the patterns of political media coverage which have been explicated and which we expect to result from the various coverage logics caused by the above mentioned list of longitudinal, transnational, national, organizational and individual factors of influence (see also table 3). Each of these coverage patterns is based on previous literature on comparative political communication research and findings, and in the method chapter we will provide a detailed key of the individual variables with which we operationalize each pattern.

Table 3

Theoretical Concepts and Main Corresponding Coverage Characteristics

Level of Influence	**Concept**	**Coverage Logic**	**Coverage Patterns**
Macro-Level: Transnational & Longitudinal	Mediatization & transnational processes	Professional logic	Analytic reporting Objectivity Neutral coverage Diversity Metacoverage Journalistic initiative
		Commercial logic	Personalization Negativism Simplification Objectivity & opinion Partisan coverage National focus
Macro-Level: National	Political system	Political logic	Personalization Negativism Partisan coverage Staged events
	Media system	Media logic	Negativism Journalistic initiative Analytical coverage Objectivity Partisan coverage
	Democratic paradigms	Quality standards	Diversity Negativism Journalistic initiative Elite sources
Meso-Level	Organizational structures	National logic	Objectivity International focus
		Regional logic	Diversity Simplification Audience relation National focus
Micro-Level	Subjective perception & behavior	Journalistic norms & political communication culture	Negativism Journalistic initiative Analytic reporting Objectivity Audience relation

Origins of Difference: Systemic Factors on National Political Press Coverage and Resulting Coverage Patterns

The goal of this study is to provide a realistic, not purely abstract, assessment of the impact which processes of mediatization and transnational convergence have on political press coverage in general, instead of on one specific, national type of coverage, and to enable general conclusions about the consequences of these processes instead of reporting on possibly purely idiosyncratic, specific characteristics of the press coverage of one individual country. Therefore, as illustrated in the previous chapter, we need to take into account two things: (1) We need to provide well-founded assumptions about the presence of various levels of mediatization in various contexts to truly be able to examine mediatization`s impact on and consequences for political press coverage patterns (2) We thus need to take factors of different national environments and their potential interrelationship with, respectively fortification, debilitation or modification of processes of mediatization and transnational convergence into account.

Referring back to the theoretical foundation of the structural-individualistic model, based on which we already allocated global processes of change as macro-factors of influence on political press content, we will take into account additional, systemic macro-factors (political and media system characteristics, political communication culture) as well as influences originating on the organizational meso-level (national vs. regional newspapers) and certain reflections of these two levels on the micro-level of journalistic self-perception (journalistic norms and role-conceptions). These contextual assessments will allow us to deduce different discursive opportunity structures present in different countries at different times, which in turn yield specific hypotheses regarding the patterns of political press coverage to expect. Due to linguistic and cultural restrictions which we detail in the method chapter, we eventually decided to focus on only two of the three models of media systems in the present empirical analysis: The Liberal Model and the Democratic Corporatist Model. We chose two Western democracies which respectively could distinctly be assigned to one of the two models: The United States and Great Britain as proxies for the Liberal Model, and Germany and Switzerland as representatives for the Democratic Corporatist Model. Of course no country can be expected to fit the theoretical “ideal type“ of any of the models devised by Hallin & Mancini; we will thus not only examine the typical characteristics of each country, but also

pay special attention to deflections and singularities present in each context. Still, this approach facilitates the view on relevant systemic factors and allows for generalized conclusions through the fog of numerous national idiosyncracies and more or less random coincidences.

The Macro-Level: Political and Media System Context

This chapter presents a comparative contextual analysis of the US, Great Britain, Germany and Switzerland with regard to macro-, meso- and micro factors relevant for patterns of political press coverage, based on the theoretical framework suggested by Hallin & Mancini (2004) in *Three Models of Media Systems*, namely: (1) Political actors and processes, (2) forms of democracy, (3) level of consensus-orientation, (4) media system characteristics and landscape, (5) political communication culture, (6) journalistic norms and role conceptions, (7) national vs. regional newspaper organizations. Throughout the chapter, we will relate back to possible interferences of processes of mediatization and transnational convergence, and will infer from the contextual factors presented various hypotheses regarding the expected patterns of political press coverage.

The four countries examined: An overview. (1) USA: The United States is a presidential, federal republic and the oldest continued democracy worldwide with a democratic constitution established in 1789.[11] The constitution is based on the sovereignty of the people and documents the importance the Founding Fathers assigned to the fragmentation of political power: A strong executive headed by the President as sole national political institution is matched with a semi-autonomous parliament. In addition, there are several independent "sub-governments", in sum also called permanent government as opposed to the presidential government, which are established and function independently from the President and his or her legislative term. One example for such an institution is the Federal Communications Commission. This framework warrants a constant political rivalry between government agencies, federal commissions and the president and his or her cabinet, especially since there is little bureaucracy or hierarchical structures to intercept competition. The Founding Fathers deliberately applied this tactic to counteract a culmination of political

[11]The text of the constitution, however, does not mention the word "democracy"at all; the only reference to the sovereignty of the people is the expression "we, the people".

power, wary of any attempt at feudal domination which they had gotten to know so well with Great Britain as their colonial master. Other consequences of this caution can be observed in the quite common situation of split government, in which executive and legislative are dominated by oppositional parties, as well as in the emphasis on permanent persuasion which is implicit in the role of the American President. While there are no restrictions regarding the formation and operation of political parties in the US, America is a de facto two-party system, with the Democrats and the Republicans as catch-all parties competing since the Civil War. The President is elected by the Electoral College, which effectively means he or she is elected by the people. Each state has a number of electoral delegates proportional to its population. The citizens of each state vote for the presidential candidates, and the state`s electoral delegates then vote for the one candidate which received the majority of votes in their state.[12] This means that the winner takes it all in presidential elections, which can even lead to a situation in which the candidate with the higher number of popular votes loses due to a smaller number of votes from the Electoral College, as happened in 2000 to Al Gore, the democratic candidate. Of 308`890`034 inhabitants of the US (Census 2010)[13], only about 50% generally vote in national elections, not to mention federal elections: In 1960, turnout lay at 62.8%, in 1996 decreasing to 49.0%, while in 2008, there was a significant increase in participation to 57.1%, fueled mainly by Hispanic, Black and young voters (Federal Election Commission; US Census Bureau, 2009).[14]

(2) Great Britain: The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy with a hereditary monarch as head of state – currently Queen Elizabeth II. However, since the Bill of Rights in 1689, the sovereignty does not lie with the monarch anymore but rather with the parliament. The Queen does retain some mainly symbolic powers which should nonetheless not be underestimated in their influence: She has the right to be consulted, the right to advise and the right to warn, as Bagehot (1865) summarizes it. Great Britain does not have a written

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[12] The only two states in which the proportional system is applied are Maine and Nebraska.

[13] According to the US POPClock Projection on Thursday, March 18, 2010, 11:31am: http://www.census.gov/population/www/popclockus.html

[14] http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/voting/013995.html; while this website is not online anymore, the same data can be accessed in the following PDF: http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/12statab/election.pdf (updated August 22, 2013)

constitution. Political conduct is regulated by long-traded codes of behavior (the “rules of the game”) and convention as well as written constitutional principles which are scattered throughout British (and, since 1972/93, EU) law. One explanation why British politics still work without written constitution is often seen in the fact that the British Empire, unlike most other current democracies, never experienced a rupture in its conduction of politics. The impulse for the creation of a codified constitution, for example independence from a colonial power like in the US, or a political revolution like in France, simply never emerged. The principle of the absolute sovereignty of Parliament, which exists since 1688, guarantees constitutionality, and internal dependencies between political institutions as well as the remaining power of the monarch ensure implicit checks and balances.

(3) Germany: Germany is a parliamentary federal republic with the Federal President as its formal head of state and the Federal Chancellor as the head of government. Its political structure is characterized by a stable multi-party system, covering a broad range of the political spectrum. Compared to the United States, party organizations are still strong and play a powerful role as important political organizations. Due to this, Germany is often called a party democracy. The first organizations resembling parties were founded in Germany in 1848, but today’s party system is based on the democratic, competitive party system the allies created after WWII. Germany is organized as a parliamentary federal republic with proportional representation. The institutions elected directly by the people are the federal parliament and the local state parliaments as well as municipal councils. Voting is still considered a civic duty, and accordingly, turnout levels in federal elections consistently approach 80%. The chancellor, head of government, is elected every four years by the federal parliament.

(4) Switzerland: The Swiss Confederation, or Latin Confoederatio Helvetica (hence the country code CH), was founded on August 1, 1291, as protective alliance of several states – an event famously, if not completely historically correct, recorded in Friedrich Schiller`s drama Wilhelm Tell. It exists as federal state with constitution since 1848. The three main institutions of the Swiss political system are direct democracy via the civic rights of referendums and initiatives, consensus and federalism. The country, an area of only 41`285

m^2 [15], consists of 26 individual cantons, and acknowledges four official languages (German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romanic).[16] Switzerland has no de iure capital due to historical sensibilities concerning the different language regions but de facto, Berne functions as its capital. A defining characteristic of Switzerland is its identity as a nation of consensus ("Willensnation"). Swiss national identity is not mainly based on a shared language and culture as is the case in most other nation states, but rather on common liberal, democratic and federal traditions and institutions. As Linder and Steffen (2006) put it, "[T]here was no Swiss society in 1848. It was only created by political-national unity. […] The political culture of modern Switzerland is therefore mainly formed by the political institutions themselves." (p. 16f.) Accordingly the Swiss government is composed of a Federal Council which consists of members of all relevant political parties. Another feature unique to the Swiss political system is its militia system ("Milizsystem"), which not only applies to the Swiss army (which consists of all – mostly male – Swiss citizens who only serve in the military several weeks per year and work a normal job during the rest of the time) but also to the Swiss parliament: Most members of parliament in Switzerland pursue an additional occupation next to their political office.

Political system characteristics. Hallin and Mancini`s (2004) classifications are based on the assumption that some features or characteristics of political systems can influence "the structure of media institutions" (p. 46), and that a common history forms the media system as well as the political system. However, the relationship between the development of both systems is not linear or causal, but rather a codependence or, as Hallin and Mancini call it, a "coevolution" (2004, p. 47). In countries of the Democratic Corporatist Model, rational-legal authority is strong and liberal institutions have developed early. Pluralism is moderate and consensus politics dominate in most countries; existing social groups have been integrated into the political process in democratic corporatism. As in the Polarized Pluralist Model, the role of the state is strong, however the emphasis lies on welfare rather than authority: The media are seen as social institutions for which the state has responsibility and for which it provides support and regulation. In the Liberal model, a strong

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[15] 60% of which are occupied by the Alps.

[16] One of which, Rhaeto-Romanic, is only spoken by 0.5% of the populace. (Schweizer Bundesamt für Statistik)

rational-legal authority and liberal institutions developed early, and majoritarianism historically dominates over the integration of strongly organized social groups into the political process. Overall, the basis for these characterizations of the two models can be described as the role and organization of the state, the type of government, the role of social groups and what Strömbäck and Kaid (2008) call historical "patterns of conflict and consensus" (p. 5). Based on Hallin and Mancini`s framework (2004), the four countries analyzed in the present study can be allocated to two different models of media systems: The USA and Great Britain[17] belong to the Liberal Model, Germany and Switzerland to the Democratic Corporatist Model. The names of these two models even refer to aspects of the political system which characterize the respective associated countries, namely democratic corporatism and liberalism (Katzenstein 1985 in Hallin & Mancini 2004).

Germany and Switzerland are both welfare states, while the US is clearly liberally oriented. Great Britain on the other hand constitutes somewhat of a hybrid, displaying some of the features of a welfare state. Despite this, the four countries do fall into the liberal and Democratic Corporatist model as described by Hallin & Mancini (2004, p. 68). This is also true concerning the integration of social groups into the political process: Switzerland and Germany clearly show signs of organized pluralism, Switzerland even of corporatism, whereas Great Britain and the US tend towards liberalism – the US more so than the UK. Important in this regard is also that press councils exist in Germany, Switzerland and the

[17] For clarification it needs to be said at this point that following, Great Britain is understood as the United Kingdom, encompassing England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. It will be referred to as Great Britain, United Kingdom (UK) or Britain. In the description of the political system the focus will be on the national government in London. The devolved national administrations of Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland will not be included in more detail as they are not relevant in the case of the present research. Regarding the media system, emphasis will also be put on England, since all truly national media originates here despite Scotland and North Ireland having their own distinctive newspapers.

UK,[18] and unions for media personnel can be found in all four countries[19]. However, this should not obscure the fact that we are actually talking about four unique countries, which while alike in certain areas, vary greatly in others.

Political actors and processes. While all four countries are democracies, the UK and Germany are parliamentary democracies, with Germany often called a party democracy due to the importance of its parties in the political process, the US is a presidential democracy and Switzerland a direct democracy. Furthermore, Great Britain, with a ceremonial monarch as head of state, is not a federal republic like the US, Germany and Switzerland. Certainly, these are only small divergences but ones which can be assumed to have a visible impact on media behavior and political media coverage, as we will see.

Presidential democracy. A presidential democracy demands of its media a much different focus on the head of state than do the other three types of democracy. The American presidential system, as compared to the more common parliamentary system (Lijphart 1999)[20] has several unique characteristics mostly regarding the role of the President. The American Presidency is probably the most powerful office worldwide, most relevant both for the American people as well as for the international political community – the President represents the US internally as well as outwards, interlocking domestic issues and requirements with foreign policy decisions. The frequent and politically immanent integration

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[18] German Press Council ("Deutscher Presserat"): http://www.presserat.info/

Swiss Press Council ("Schweizer Presserat"): http://www.presserat.ch/

Press Complaints Commission (PCC): http://www.pcc.org.uk/

[19] „Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft" (ver.di): http://www.verdi.de/

„Schweizer Syndikat Medienschaffender" (SSM): http://www.ssm-site.ch/de/

National Union of Journalists (NUJ): http://www.nuj.org.uk/

National Writers Union: https://nwu.org/

[20] Following Lijphart`s (1999) definition, of 36 democratic states only 5 are non-parliamentary, among them Switzerland and the United States.

of domestic and foreign policy in the United States as well as the politically dominant role of the US in the world lead to several discursive opportunities: High visibility for the US versus other nations as political actor, and legitimacy for a dominance of the US as actor even regarding international events. This provides a structure that supports an ethnocentric media coverage focus on mainly US news or international events in which the US is directly involved – these events provide additional resonance due to higher involvement. Thus, in the US, a high emphasis on US-related political events can be expected in political press coverage. Furthermore, since most politics and accordingly most political offices and institutions are rooted in local communities, the President is the only nationally comprehensive governmental institution[21] as well as one of the nation`s political symbols. He or she is pitted not only against Congress, but also against several permanent sub-governmental institutions and a number of political networks which often form around single issues and are composed of executive agencies as well as parliamentary commissions and interest groups. The president of the United States thus governs as an individual, not necessarily as representative of a party or parliament. This leads to high legitimacy for personalized media coverage regarding the president, even including non-political details of his life. The symbolic character of the presidential office in the US additionally provides consonance to this kind of reporting.

As neither a formal political opposition nor parliamentary party discipline exists in the US political system, the President is dependent on persuasion to achieve his political goals. He has to seek ad hoc majorities for his political ideas or suggestions, and while he can send messages including propositions for new laws to Congress and presents it with the state budget, he does not have the power to make the final decision on proposed bills or the state budget. Additionally, even though the President has a veto regarding the decision on proposed laws, this can only suspend ruling for some time, but not cancel it. Thus, persuasion is an inherent part of the American political system, and political decisions often depend on the president winning or losing his campaign for a certain political goal. This creates legitimacy for the persuasive power and the political strengths of the president as matters of political

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[21] The only department which comes close to a national institution is the Department of Homeland Security, whose creation in 2002 was only possible due to the time of crisis in which it was founded.

media coverage. Strategic reporting therefore could be expected to come more natural to political journalists in the US, and might even be seen as fulfilling a necessary role within a presidential democracy. Some scholars therefore argue, that a focus on the personal as well as on the game-aspects of political action and processes is indeed partly inherent to the American political system and not as perilous as many suggest (Schudson 1998, Schudson & Tifft 2005, Graber 2003). Traditionally, however, Patterson (1993) and many others following in his footsteps suspect that a decline of political parties and an increase in the power of the media has led to a dominance of game schemes over schemes of governance[22] and that this is a precarious and rather recent development in American politics[23] (Capella & Jamieson 1996). While we do agree that the role of the media in society and politics has undergone change during the last decades, political system characteristics like the one described above might well be responsible for the cross-country differences which have been described in numerous studies especially with processes like Americanization, modernization and hybridization in mind (Strömbäck & Dimitrova 2006, Schulz & Zeh 2005, Gunther & Mughan 2000, Esser & Pfetsch 2004, Plasser 2000).

Parliamentary democracy. In Great Britain, the Westminster model as it exists today developed in the 19th century, its main pillars being parliamentary sovereignty, first-past-the-post electoral system, one-party-government, responsible government[24] and executive dominance of parliament (Kavanagh et al. 2006, p. 178). General elections take place at least every five years, but not all parliaments run for the full period – on request of and at a time suggested by the Prime Minister, the Queen dissolves parliament to permit a general election. As in many other Western democracies, turnout rates have been constantly declining, with

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[22] Game and governing schemes in recent literature evolved into frames (Entman 1993), with their labels differing from author to author. Most commonly used are strategy vs. policy frame or game frame vs. issue frame, with horse-race-frames forming a sub-category to strategy/ game frames.

[23] Another argument in this direction concerns the transformation into an imperial presidency (Rimmerman 1993, Heideking 2002)

[24] Responsible government summarizes the notion of responsibility of the individual ministers to Parliament and the collective responsibility of Cabinet for policies – both is possible mainly due to the British electoral system and the usually resulting one-party-government.

turnout reaching only 61.4% in 2005 (House of Commons 2005). Unlike in most other Western democracies, however, British elections are not based on proportional representation but rather on the first past the post system: The candidate who wins the most votes (but not necessarily a majority of votes) wins the constituency. Also unlike elections in most other Western countries, there is a maximum amount of £20 million that parties are allowed to spend in an election. In all but one election post-WWII until the time of writing, one of the two dominant parties has won the majority of seats and thereby constituted a one-party-government.[25] However, this kind of electoral system by design disadvantages smaller parties as it awards them much less political influence than any system with proportional representation and has therefore been often criticized especially by the Liberal Democrats, the smallest party currently relevant in general elections. Yet, following a committee report concerning alternatives to the first past the post system, a replacement of the existing electoral system has been more or less finally rejected in 2006. Together with the fact that the leader of the opposition in Parliament receives an official appointment (complete with a regular salary) and thus fills a role which constitutes an institutionalized counterpart to the leader of the largest party, namely the Prime Minister, this can be assumed to have an influence on discursive opportunity structures: The visibility which the British opposition receives due to its institutionalization and activity as well as the resonance caused by the exasperation of smaller parties concerning their systemic disadvantage and political processes based on convention rather than regulations favor a critical attitude to politics in general and the government specifically. British journalists could thus be expected to tend towards critical, conflict-oriented and negative coverage.

The bicameral parliament is the supreme legislative body of the UK and is composed of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The latter was originally a hereditary,

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[25] In 2010, however, elections resulted in a hung parliament, meaning the Conservative party, while gaining the most votes, did not reach the 326 votes needed for an overall majority. 35% of voters had voted for a party other than Labour or Conservative (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/election2010/results/, viewed on May 20th, 2010). After prolonged coalition talks, David Cameron now leads a coalition between Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, ending the 13-year-reign of the Labour party and for the first time including the Liberal Democrats in government.

aristocratic chamber which today reviews the legislation initiated by the House of Commons and can suggest amendments as well as veto bills for a certain time. The chamber`s main role is arguably rather a symbolic one, with government oftentimes accepting amendments to avoid public clashes with the House of Lords.[26] Thus the weightier chamber of parliament is the House of Commons, into which each constituency elects a member in general elections. Parliament, although it rarely makes policy itself, does influence and scrutinize governmental policy making and provides a pool of talent for the recruitment of government. This also means that in the UK, in opposition to for example the United States, a certain fusion of executive and legislature takes place as members of Cabinet are at the same time members of parliament. Legislation, mostly coming from governmental departments, is reviewed on several levels and in several types of parliamentary committees before it is decided on and in case of approval receives Royal Assent. Parliament is thus the final authority in legislative decisions, and additionally possesses a certain degree of control over the executive, who has to answer to parliament. However, certain developments during the 20th century have weakened the role of parliament, as many scholars argue (for example Kavanagh et al. 2006):
(1) With the authority of the whips, the importance of party solidarity and voting along party lines has increased.[27]
(2) Since the emergence of only two dominant parties after 1945, government usually dominates parliament.
(3) A growing amount of legislation, caused for example by a greater number of government initiatives as well as additional EU legislation, leaves less time for deliberation and scrutiny in parliament.
Additionally, many MPs are increasingly busy with handling local issues and requests of their constituents, as Norton (1994) finds. There is a concern that parliament may not have the time and resources anymore to properly inspect government initiated legislature, which fuels the aforementioned fear of a too dominant executive. Yet parliamentary arguments do have an important impact on government besides content-related decisions: They set the mood and influence the morale of the public as well as the members of government, who, after all, have the responsibility to rule the house if they want to stay in power. Appropriately, Monday thru

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[26] Currently, the House of Lords is moreover going through extensive reforms.

[27] Except for certain issues like Iraq, which, as Kavanagh et al (2006) argue, “offend party instincts” (p. 385) and have led to renegade votes.

Thursday, ministers (including the Prime Minister) have to take turns in facing Parliament directly during one hour of "Question Time", in which they answer scripted as well as unscripted questions from the MPs. This event tends to be characterized by a general rumpus and a tendency towards rowdy behavior, but has occasionally led to the exposure of misconduct or injustice. The main dichotomy in the structure of government is often seen as Prime Minister vs. Cabinet, with some scholars predicting a growing dominance of the Prime ministerial power. However, Prime Minister, Cabinet and Civil Service are mutually dependent on each other, and while there are no legal checks and balances on the office of the Prime Minister, numerous informal influences do keep him in check. The Prime Minister acts as primus inter pares among the Cabinet which she has selected. Lacking support of Members of Parliament, for example, instead of a missing public vote, has repeatedly proven a good predictor of political failure of a Prime Minister (Kavanagh et al. 2006). Especially senior ministers often possess too much authority for the head of state to completely dismiss them, and especially in challenging political times the Prime Minister depends on the support of the cabinet in her confrontation with the electorate. And while the Prime Minister has the power to change the structure of government without any consultation, a standard which has caused more and more institutional support to accumulate in this office since WWII (Foley 2000, Hennessy 2001, Rose 2001), only the governmental departments have the power to make and implement detailed policy. This strengthens the position of the ministers, who in any event hold a great deal of resources in terms of party support, bureaucratic resources, departmental knowledge and policy networks (Kavanagh et al 2006, p. 205). Therefore, the Prime Minister is reliant on building alliances and relationships with his ministers in the same way those are dependent on his patronage, approval and support. He is the only governmental actor who possesses a collective, and not fractured, oversight over the political proceedings, but it is important to keep in mind that this oversight is based on information provided by the Cabinet and the Civil Service. In collecting this information and building alliances, a Prime Minister can employ different tactics: He can rely on mainly bilateral meetings (interventionist strategy), he can seek parliamentary consensus, if necessary by delaying procedures of decision (collectivist strategy) or he can enforce strategic directions within the core executive (directive strategy). The latter strategy was for example pursued by Tony Blair by establishing the office of "Cabinet Enforcer" to ensure the allegiance of his ministers; Seymour-Ure (2003) suggests that with this tactic Blair reacted to a public which increasingly expects

interventionist/directive leadership. This increasing importance and power of the roles of Prime Minister and Ministers also influence the structure of discursive opportunities: They entail growing visibility for these political offices as well as heightened legitimacy for information coming from or regarding these positions. This could be expected to cause an increasing focus on these politicians in political press coverage, possibly linked with an increased personalization. This is true especially for the position of the Prime Minister, whose growing importance and political power as individual political actor (even linked to the fear of the office becoming "presidential") creates higher legitimacy, visibility and possibly also resonance for the individual in this position.

The ministers work closely together with the officials of the Civil Service. Since the Haldane Report from 1918, Westminster (i.e. the ministers) and Whitehall (the Civil Service) are assumed to collaborate on developing and implementing policies: While the ministers are accountable to the sovereign parliament, the officials are supposed to be politically neutral and loyal to their department`s minister. During the 1950s, this system was perceived as manifesting a largely top-down process originating in the core executive, an image which was encouraged by a culture of secrecy regarding the proceedings of policy making. This culture, which leads Hallin and Mancini (2004) to describe the United Kingdom as a "national security state" (p. 234), was especially prevalent during the Thatcher government, which followed a very restrictive policy regarding media information (Ewing & Gearty 1990). While a certain culture of secrecy is still existent, the dominance of a top-down model of policy making has undergone some changes. During the last decades, a model of multi-level politics has become more and more prevalent in literature, emphasizing the mutual dependency of ministers and officials and pointing out the importance of departmental conflicts and flexible, temporary issue-networks (Pierre & Stoker 2000). While in general it can be said that officials are dependent on ministerial support (a fact which privileges strong, decisive ministers) and ministers must rely on the advice of their officials regarding their policy decisions and issue statements, there is a large degree of autonomy inherent in decision-making in British politics. Networks form around policy issues and across departments, increasingly also including external specialists or consultants. These issue-networks are in most cases based on informal conventions rather than institutionalized structures, mirroring the general predominance of

traditions and conventions over codified regulations in the Westminster system.[28] The growing inclusion of outside experts into departments as well as parliamentary and issue networks can also be assumed to leave marks on the political press coverage, as it creates increased discursive opportunities (namely visibility and legitimacy) for external experts, which will presumably cause a stronger presence of these kinds of sources in political press coverage. This goes in line with recent research in this field, which indicates that ministers have become more pro-active and dominant over the last decades (Foster 2005), relying increasingly on outside sources for advice, whereas officials accordingly "increasingly defin [e] their role as policy implementers rather than policy analysts" (Campbell & Wilson 1995, p. 60).[29]

The role of political parties and party democracy. Political parties in Germany are included in the constitution as a "necessary part of the free democratic constitutional structure", fulfilling a public duty in contributing to the political decision-making process of the people (German party law, §1).[30] After 1945, a number of parties without ties to the Nazi party were licensed.[31] Among them the two current German people`s parties ("Volksparteien"), the Social Democratic Party (SPD) which was a close copy of the SPD of the Weimar Republic, and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), a newly founded party aiming to appeal to a less narrow ideological group. The parties are allocated seats in parliament by proportional representation, however votes for a party only count if the party receives at least 5% of the second votes or 3 direct mandates respectively. This five-percent-barrier has been implemented following the experiences of the Weimar Republic: The

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[28] Recent Labour governments have emphasized the need of cross-departmental work, calling for "joined-up government".

[29] This is often interpreted as a result of the Thatcher governments` critical view of the Civil Service as one cause for an ineffective, interest-driven government and the resulting strengthening of ministerial autonomy.

[30] http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/bundesrecht/partg/gesamt.pdf; This also means that they are eligible for governmental funding according to their public support (i.e. votes).

[31] In Eastern Germany, the Russian allies set up a Communist regime under the leadership of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland, SED). This totalitarian regime collapsed in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin wall.

numerous small fractions represented in its parliament led to constant disagreements and in turn to an unstable government, often incapable of any action due to missing support in parliament. Despite this regulation, parties that receive at least 0.5% of all votes are still eligible for government funding. Parties usually have to form coalitions, since an absolute majority in parliament is needed to build a government. In expectance of leading such a coalition, parties often nominate candidates for chancellor early on during the election campaign – this practice adds a personal aspect to an otherwise rather party-dominated election process.

Parties are not, like in the United States for example, oriented towards certain issues, but rather occupy a specific political stance, still more or less in tradition with their origin. Thus, it is easier for German journalists than for their American counterparts to display continuous partisanship rather than having to choose between agreement or disagreement depending on individual issues. On the other hand, however, political systems with multiple parties tend to favour issues over individuals or candidates – while the larger parties often constitute catch-all-parties (as is the case in Germany), smaller parties focus on specific social issues or groups which makes the political personnel less important than the political goals (Strömbäck & Kaid 2008). In Germany, the two biggest parties, SPD and CDU, today constitute catch-all parties – they state to not pursue any special interest politics for any certain class or group of people but are oriented towards common welfare and political compromise. The Christian Democrats lean towards conservative, middle-class values, the Social Democrats are oriented towards more leftist, social democratic values of the working and lower middle-class. Of the smaller parties in parliament, the FDP (Free Democratic Party) promotes a free market and civic liberties, the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism) caters to a rather leftist, socialist audience, and the Green party focuses mostly on environmental issues. Although the role of partisanship has abated throughout the last years (Jung & Roth 1998, Gluchowski & Wilamowitz-Moellendorf 1998), the long tradition of party membership and loyalty usually makes party identification a still very relevant influence in elections. This leads to a twofold assumption: First, the large number of parties and their comparatively strong role in political communication in Germany generally will entail high visibility, legitimacy and resonance connected to these institutions, which makes a focus on issue coverage instead of individual political personnel more likely, while personalization can be expected to be relatively low.

Second, we can nonetheless assume that visibility and resonance of political parties as well as their legitimacy as objects of media coverage and support has decreased during recent years and thus political coverage in Germany can be expected to be less partisan today than it was during the 1960s.

The situation in the US, however, might be reverse: In general, American parties have always been rather loosely linked groups without strongly hierarchical structures, in which no formal membership was required[32]. The autonomy which is hereby given to the lower levels of party organization guarantees a topical and local flexibility which makes the reliance on only two main political parties possible. Moreover, the parties usually do not adhere to specific party lines but rather function as catch-all-parties, incorporating current political movements and ideas once they gather sufficient public support. Third parties here function as somewhat of an indicator for relevant political movements, and the two dominant parties usually try to adopt issues (and sometimes even the associated personnel) with which smaller third parties gain relevant public support in elections. This can be seen as another reason for the success of the two-party system in the US, and in something of a countermotion to party development in Europe, political parties in the US are recently growing in importance, a process of party building gaining momentum among the Democratic and Republican Party. This process of party building and ideologization can be expected to lead to a heightened visibility and resonance of political parties in the US which in turn can be assumed to lead to increased partisanship in media reporting, especially as simple agreement or disagreement with individual issues is not as self-evidently non-partisan anymore as it used to be. Additionally, competitive and attack statements from party representatives and the presence of more conflict will presumably increase the discursive opportunities (i.e. visibility and resonance, maybe even legitimacy) for negativism in political reporting. One indicator for this trend might be seen in the tendency towards more partisan news outlets especially in television, as phenomena like the cable channel FOX News indicate.

Unlike in the USA, political parties traditionally play a significant role in British politics. 70% of the electorate still identified with a party in 2005 although the numbers are declining

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[32] When registering to vote, citizens can indicate affiliation with a party to gain access to closed primaries.

(Kavanagh et al. 2006). Party discipline is very strong and assisted by the fact that most MPs are known mainly by their party labels. This means that loyalty to their respective party is necessary for re-election and the achievement of offices, and that party image often comes before individual politician`s images. Besides this top-down structure, hierarchies are strict, too: Parties for example have the right to suspend or dismiss candidates who they perceive brought the party into disrespect. However, in recent years the atmosphere seems to have become more tolerant, with individual renegade votes indicating internal division within the parties. Akin to the USA, Great Britain has a de facto two-party system which is facilitated by the first past the post electoral system. The Labour Party and the Conservatives have been the two dominant parties since Labour replaced the Liberals in 1918. Between 1945 and 2001, these two parties regularly gained more than 90% of the seats in parliament, since 2005 the Liberal Democrats have emerged as third relevant party, gaining almost a quarter of the vote. [33] While party programs and manifestos guarantee a certain programmatic consistency and facilitate party discipline and electoral responsibility, British parties are highly influenced by their role as either government or opposition. The fact that the opposition is officially recognized in parliament (with the Leader of the Opposition leading the so-called "shadow cabinet") supports this assumption. This fact gives additional weight to discursive opportunity structures facilitating conflict-focused and negative political media coverage.

In Switzerland, the situations of political parties is rather particular: They developed during the 19th century from citizen`s groups and associations (Gruner 1977), with local parties emerging as early as the turn of the century. Today, Switzerland is a multiple party democracy whose parties are characterized by a horizontal as well as vertical fragmentation (Klöti et al. 2006) – in the elections for National Council in 2007, 13 parties won seats (Swiss Federal Statistical Office 2008)[34]. And across the 26 cantons, more than 180 political parties on the cantonal, communal or local level exist. The four biggest parties represented in the Federal

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[33] The Liberal Democrats formed in 1988 through a fusion of the Liberals with the Social Democratic Party that had split from Labour in 1981.

[34] All data from the Statistical Office can be viewed here: http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index.html

Council today are the Liberal Party (FDP), the Christian Democratic People`s Party (CVP), the Social Democratic Party (SP) and the Swiss People`s Party (SVP).[35]

Despite the high number of them, Swiss parties occupy a rather weak role in the political process: National party organizations are comparably small and have only limited financial resources; local sections are much more strongly positioned in their respective cantons but they are not obligated to follow the same political course as their national "umbrella organizations" and often cannot be compelled to do s. Scholars attribute this to several factors immanent in the Swiss political system (Blum 2005, Rickenbacher 1995, Ladner 1996) which can be summarized as follows:

(1) Size of the country and federalism

The small size of Switzerland, coupled with its heterogeneity regarding culture and language, limits a party`s possibilities for expansion, recruiting and integration of regional party sections. The militia system, due as well in part to Switzerland`s size, causes low professionalism which additionally weakens the parties position. Secondary, federalism impedes the development of strong national party organizations and supports autonomous local party sections (Neidhard 1986, Klöti et al. 2006) as different cantons entail different political procedures and different populations. Local parties (90% of which are sections of national party organizations) therefore have to adapt to regional conditions which can even lead to differences in political beliefs and degrees of extremism, making the coordination for national party organizations even more difficult.

(2) Missing acknowledgement in the Swiss constitution and system of direct democracy

The Swiss constitution does not formally acknowledge party institutions, which in itself can be seen as a sign of the weak status of political parties.[36] More important however is the fact that interest and lobby groups as well as social movements, as long as they possess enough political relevance, have a certain privilege over political parties: For once, interest groups are formally included in the political decision making process. Also, initiatives and referendums,

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[35] For a more detailed description of each party and its role in the Swiss political system, see the Swiss Handbook of Politics (Année politique Suisse) which provides a yearly overview over party formations.

[36] In Switzerland, parties are legally organized as associations which are regulated by the civil code.

in which interest groups and social movements specifically cater to the respective issue which is voted on, are usually perceived as more important than federal elections. This disadvantages political parties, especially since they also usually have less financial as well as social resources for mobilizing support than interest groups do.

(3) Consensus-focus in politics

The consensus democracy entails a constant participation of all relevant political parties in government, which (despite the often assumed instability of multiparty systems) leads to a very stable party system (Ladner 1996). This means that political opposition has very little prospect of success, and that a clear political profiling or positioning of a party is rather difficult. During the last decades, various scholars have argued that the political relevance of political parties in the Swiss system is still decreasing (Gruner 1984, Kriesi 1986) however local parties to some extent compensate for the weak role of national party organizations as they continue to thrive, departing from purely paradigmatic politics towards ideology (Ladner 1991, Schaller 1994).

Consensus-orientation and consensus democracy. All four countries included in this study`s sample tend towards moderate pluralism, since "liberal forces consolidated their hegemony relatively early" (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p. 62). The US, "a liberal society from the beginning" (ibid.), can even be seen as the ideal example for moderate pluralism, while Germany is "very much [a] mixed case in terms of this historical distinction" (ibid., p. 63), as the tradition of democratic government in Germany can be seen as relatively short. The first parliamentary system, introduced in 1919, rapidly deteriorated due to deficiencies in its first constitution and the success of Adolf Hitler. Exploiting the possibilities of a constitutional and political system that offered (too) many liberties, he legally came to power in 1933. Soon after, a totalitarian order was established in which the media were used as means to perpetuate the regime's grip on power; the freedom of the press was abolished and all media outlets underwent a process of political alignment. It was not until the postwar years that with the support of the liberal USA, democracy was reinstituted, and it was with the experience of the preceding decades in mind that the new constitution, the "Grundgesetz" or Basic Law, was conceived. It is this context of a tradition of federalism and partisanship combined with the failure of the Weimar Republic and the events of the Third Reich that characterizes the

contemporary situation of media and politics in Germany; it is therefore also a history of polarized pluralism before 1945 which still influences its media landscape today.

Regarding the functioning of government, Great Britain and the UK feature a majoritarian government, and Switzerland and Germany each possess a consensus-focused government. In fact, Great Britain and Switzerland each constitute an ideal form of the majoritarian and consensus government respectively. The political system in Switzerland is based on consensus democracy since the early 20th century.[37] The Swiss cantons are politically autonomous and rather segmented in their political culture. This is at the same time reason for and result of the fact that the national government has only few competences and can be understood as instrument for cooperation and solidarity between the cantons. While for example multilingualism is protected on a national level, each language region emphasizes one language above the other three, therefore ensuring the continuation and fostering of the local dialects and customs. A similar process can be observed concerning political and party culture, which can differ markedly between cantons. Parties differ, for example, between language regions - the most prominent case is the *Lega dei Ticinesi* in italian-speaking Ticino, which is modeled after the *Lega Nord* in the neighboring Italy. Other examples are the *Alliance de Gauche* in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, or the *Entente Jurassienne* in the Jura which has as its central goal the unification of the Southern part of the Jura (city of Berne) with the rest of the region. Regional distinctions can also be found in national versus local identity – for French-speaking Swiss, local affiliation plays an important role, while in the German-speaking part of the country national identification is higher (Linder 2006). Findings by Schloeth and Klöti (1996) that smaller cantons rely more heavily on local media than do their larger counterparts support this disparity. One more noteworthy feature of Swiss federalism is the curious situation that voters will occupy various roles in different electoral processes: Depending on their political affiliations, they might belong to a political majority

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[37] In Switzerland, the consensus system is often called concordance democracy (from Latin "concordia" = harmony). While the term consensus democracy focuses on the way political decisions are made (via consensus), the term concordance democracy puts the emphasis on the composition of the government (including all relevant societal groups into the political process). Since both concepts describe the same form of government, they will be used interchangeably.

in cantonal elections whereas on the national level, they are part of the political minority. Therefore, the number of political institutions in Switzerland is relatively high, compared to other Western democracies. Additionally, not all relevant politics takes place in Berne, instead there are also various political elections and decisions in the individual cantons which the press needs to pay attention to. Thus, Swiss media need to cover a rather large number of events, institutions and political actors. Together with the fact that direct democracy requires highly informed citizens (see below), this might mean that the media dedicates a relatively large amount of its coverage to political events and processes compared to less multifaceted countries.[38] In 2007, 48.3% of Swiss citizens voted in the national election[39][40] whereas citizens from lower social stratas and in more rural cantons tend towards even lower numbers of political participation (Linder 2006, p. 24).[41] However, national elections of the federal council are not the only way Swiss voters can take part in democracy: The federal referendum and the federal initiative are civic rights written into the Swiss constitution which states that only the people can determine changes in the constitution. While this principle is based on ideas of Enlightenment, it was not a foreign notion to Swiss political culture which since the 14th century relied on public ballots in many regions. This direct involvement of the people into political processes and political decisions and the resulting responsibility create a structure of discursive opportunities which ascribes a high degree of visibility, resonance and legitimacy to political information as well as to "regular" citizens as political actors. This can be expected to concede more space to political media coverage in Switzerland, compared with

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[38] While in this study due to financial and timely resources we only examine media from the German-speaking part of Switzerland, we do expect that this is true for all four language-areas.

[39] Bundesamt für Statistik: http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/17/02/blank/key/national_rat/wahlbeteiligung.html

[40] 2003 and 1999 it were 45.2% and 43.3% respectively – one explanation for the rising numbers might be increasingly controversial election campaigns especially by the Swiss people`s party (SVP) during the last years.

[41] A study by Wernli (Kriesi et al. 1995, pp. 73) in contrast shows that differences in participation in Switzerland are not impacted as much by sociodemographic factors as they are by macropolitical indicators like degree of contention in an election or mandatory voting, which exists in the canton Schaffhausen.

the other countries examined, and to a higher number of non-elite sources present in the coverage.

Referendums were introduced to the Swiss constitution in 1874, initiatives followed in 1891. The referendum allows citizens to challenge a law which has been passed by parliament by collecting at least 50`000 votes within 100 days. Subsequently, the law is decided on by a simple popular majority vote. With federal initiatives, citizens have the chance to put a constitutional amendment to national vote if they collect at least 100`000 signatures within 18 months. Parliament can then draft a counter-proposal, on both of which is then decided by a double majority of national and cantonal vote. Yet, participation in these public ballots is similarly low with percentages between 36 and 53 since 2000.[42][43] Again in the words of Linder and Steffen, "taking the […] low voter turnout […] as only indicator one would have to speak of a passive political culture in Switzerland" (2006, p. 29). But on the other hand, contentment with democracy is very high (86% in 2002), as is trust in political institutions like parliament, government or public administration (Linder 2006, p. 29). Besides this nationally comprehensive notion, however, political participation and even political campaigning are diverse among the 26 cantons (Schloeth & Klöti 1996) – Armingeon therefore describes Switzerland as "an especially typical and distinctive example of the political systems of Europe with regard to regional differences of citizen`s political decisions." (cited after Kriesi 1995, p. 295). Despite mirroring European international differences on a smaller scale, all cantons are equal in their high number of political elections and the fact that many of these elections directly concern decisions about political issues. Together with the generally high number of referenda, this causes high resonance and visibility of political events, which presumably leads to a dominance of substantial political media coverage instead of strategy coverage or personalization. However, Freitag (1996) argues that this multitude of political and electoral requirements towards the citizens can also have negative consequences concerning electoral participation: First, voter fatigue, which has repeatedly been indicated as result of frequent elections, and second, a certain circumcision of

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[42] http://www.polittrends.ch/pub/a01.pdf, viewed March 3rd, 2010.

[43] Interestingly, the existence of referendums and initiatives which concern specific issues does not lower the relevance of issues for voting decisions in national elections, as Linder (Kriesi et al. 1995) demonstrates.

the competences of political institutions like parliament, government or parties as voters themselves can make authoritative decisions with regard to political content when participating in referendums or initiatives (Freitag 1996, p. 12f.). Thus, the importance of elections declines compared to other ballots. Additionally, a high level of political knowledge and involvement are required for decision-making in these ballots. This demands a great deal not only of the citizens but also of the media which have the responsibility to inform and prepare their audience for each of the issues up for debate and election. Furthermore, the normalcy of citizens as active participants in the political process, directly influencing political decisions, can be expected to cause a high resonance and legitimacy for an active kind of reporting which broaches issues from the citizens` perspective and includes political suggestions and demands directed at politicians and the government.

Political concordance developed from politico-economic concordance after WWII, integrating influential political and social organizations into the political process and relying on negotiation and compromise for political decision-making and the resolution of political conflicts. This means that there is neither a distinction between government and opposition, nor is there any competition for participation in government. Parliament consists of two houses: The National Council ("Nationalrat") whose 200 members are elected based on proportional representation based on the population of the 26 cantons and who represent the people, and the Council of States ("Staenderat"), in which the cantons are represented. Together, National Council and Council of States form the Federal Assembly.[44] The National Council is nationally elected by the people every 4 years, whereas the members of the Council of States are each elected individually in each canton.

The Federal Assembly elects the Federal Council, which is the Swiss executive branch, every four years. Government consists of seven councilmen, among them the President and head of state as primus inter pares. He or she is elected every year by the Federal Assembly and mainly assumes representative responsibilities, presenting the decisions and actions of the Federal Council in Switzerland and abroad. Parties that are currently represented in the Federal Council are the Swiss People`s Party (SVP), the Social Democratic Party (SP), the Liberals (FDP), the Christian Democratic Party (CVP) and the Center-Right ("Bourgeois") Democratic Party (BDP). This formation is the first which does not follow the so-called "magic formula" of Council composition that existed from 1959 until 2003; during these

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[44] The National Council has 200, the Council of States 46 members.

years, the Federal Council always consisted of two representatives each from the CVP, FDP and SP, the three strongest parties in parliament, and one representative from the SVP, which occupied fourth place in parliament. The year 2007 was also the year with the first election to result in an opposition: Following the election of SVP`s Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf into Federal Council instead of the more extremist Christoph Blocher, which the SVP had originally nominated, the party excluded Widmer-Schlumpf as well as Samuel Schmidt, another, already elected Councilman. It then declared to defect into opposition and later on even excluded the cantonal party section to which Mrs. Widmer-Schlumpf belonged when it stayed loyal to its candidate. However, when Samuel Schmidt (SVP) resigned in 2008 and longstanding party president Ueli Maurer (SVP) replaced him, the SVP was once again embedded into government.

The political decision-making process in Switzerland is as well characterized by an integration of all relevant public groups and an aim for consensus; its four stages present various opportunities for journalistic investigation, initiative and the taking of sides or supporting of specific groups or arguments, while at the same time preventing any stark conflict to arise without political control. The following are the four stages, of which this institutionalized decision-making process is comprised:

(1) Pre-parliament: Expert commissions

Once an issue is brought up for political decision, parliament assembles an expert-commission which drafts a proposal. Usually, experts are chosen based on the expected lines of conflict concerning the topic in question, to ensure the fullest possible disclosure of potential counterarguments or conflicts. In a next step, the proposal is presented to the concerned parties (including organizations, political parties and cantons) which then issue a written statement in which they list possible problems or suggestions.[45] This practice of including all concerned organizations before parliamentary discussion takes place is meant above all to decrease the chance of referendums after a proposition is made public.

(2) Parliamentary decision

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[45] Usually, every draft proposal is sent out to every canton, which means that especially smaller cantons at times cannot manage to process the high number of proposals and therefore do not always issue statements.

Once the draft proposition has been consulted by all parties involved, parliament works out a bill which is then presented to the people for judgment. Parliament decisions are not only constricted by preset proposals but also by subsequent control through the people`s vote. On the other hand, parliament is independent from government and does not need to support any of its initiatives. Additionally, parliamentary decisions typically enjoy a high public acceptance due to their twofold, namely democratic and federal, legitimation.

(3) Public vote

Once a proposal has gone through parliament, the people vote about it directly. Preferences expressed in public ballots have to be accepted by parliament. In general, it is easier to lower the risk of a referendum in pre-parliament processes than to chance its emergence since the results of any referendum are usually not easily predictable.[46] After the public vote, administrative processing follows.

(5) Government reaction

The Federal Council does not take many actual decisions content-wise once a bill has reached its level. Rather, its influence consists in taking strategic influence in the decision-making process and the administrative processing. In most cases, the Federal Council tries to follow the submitted proposal to avoid referendums (Linder 2001).

Considering this system of decision-making, it is clear that a consensus-democracy possesses different structures, functions and goals than any majoritarian system. Linder (2001) as well as Klöti et al. (2006) and Armingeon & Freitag (1997) point out that the notions of consensus and concordance also play a role in social and public life in general: Almost all public institutions pay heed to the system of proportional representation (of language-regions), sport clubs and the like ensure that languages and cultural regions are fairly represented in their directorate or management. Furthermore, Linder and others argue, in a country as small as Switzerland, one is bound to meet one another more than once, not just in political circles, and often one is dependent on one another. Therefore, consensus is at most times preferable to conflict. Additionally, the number of political institutions in Switzerland is rather high

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[46] A good example for this is the case of the ban on minarets: Based on opinion polls by the gfs.bern, the predicted outcome of the initiative was a rejection of the ban on minarets by 53%. The initiative resulted in a approval of the ban by 57% (Longchamp 2009, Schweizer Bundeskanzlei 2009: http://www.bk.admin.ch/)

compared to the country`s size and its personal resources, which is only possible because at least most communal and local political actors have other, additional positions than just their political office. Thus, they might be in varying situations, depending on the bill or initiative which is discussed and depending on their various roles. This also supports the notion of consensus. This consensus-focus combined with the rather small size of Switzerland, also leads to a comparative closeness between journalists and politicians. Together with the socialization of Swiss journalists into the consensus system, we would thus expect legitimacy and consonance for advocacy journalism, critical coverage of the government or a focus on conflict in political press coverage to be low. Dialog and consensus, on the other hand, can be expected to possess high legitimacy and consonance and thus to occur more often in political media reporting. The "pareto-optimal" decisions which are produced in a consensus-democracy are characterized by six factors (Linder 2001, p. 307): Proximity to the status quo, compromises, compensation, problem-solving instead of bargaining, balance between organizations and parliament and a specific culture of conduct among the political elite. While generally enabling the consensus-system by making pragmatic compromises and integration possible, these aspects also result in some critical points regarding democracy based on concordance and consensus: The political decision-making process is rather slow, leaving not much possibility for political innovation. Moreover, if a bargaining-culture is established in political circles, this can lead to a perpetual majority and a stand-still in politics. Furthermore, the Swiss system offers little chances for non-elite or less powerful citizens to participate in politics, as national elections are less influential than public ballots. Political and economic power are closely linked, and responsibilities and conflicts become blurred during the pre-parliamentary process. This strong integration of the political and economic elite in political processes leads to a high visibility of and resonance to elite sources, as well as a strong legitimacy for these kinds of sources. Thus, numerous elite sources of a broad spectrum can be expected in Swiss political media coverage. Finally, there is not much room for parties to distinguish themselves via a specific party program or to position themselves in any kind of political opposition which limits the chances for structural reforms.

Furthermore, political culture in Switzerland is closely linked to political system structures and can be described among two lines: National identity and patterns of political behavior. Swiss national identity is mainly built on "idealized images from the late Medieval Ages,

which made the history of the Swiss Confederation seem virtuous". (Seitz 2006, p. 55) Since neither language nor religion were national characteristics but rather regionally distinctive, national identity was created around Switzerland as a "nation of will" ("Willensnation"), held together by its people`s willpower and virtue. This notion of exceptionality, Seitz (2006) argues, is still an important element of Swiss national identity until today. Concerning patterns of behavior, the Swiss history of practical experience with conciliation and consensus, which was scarcely interrupted by monarchal claims, facilitated political negotiation and political integration and favored a prioritization of politics over law (Seitz 2006, p. 58). While equal treatment of all four national languages was implicit in political behavior from the very beginning, inclusion of various political tendencies occurred more slowly – the Social Democratic Party was only admitted into the Federal Council after WWII. This can be explained for a large part by the fact that the Swiss emphasis on concordance does not primarily aim at the broadest possible representation, but rather at the best possible representation of all relevant (i.e. economically, socially or politically powerful)agencies. This distinctive political culture in Switzerland based on the idea of a unique identity as well as the practice of concordance tend to exclude values which are not part of its understanding of pluralism. The late integration of leftist parties as well as the late realization of women`s suffrage can be seen as examples for this phenomenon.[47] During the last centuries, conditions have been changing, and cultural hegemony in Switzerland is contended. And while the conservative fraction (mainly represented by the SVP) is very outspoken and media-savvy about its values and goals, progressive voices are far less organized. These structural preconditions have several implications for the discursive opportunities and accordingly also for political media coverage in Switzerland:

(1) The formation of government, consisting of seven equally powerful councilmen, limits the visibility of each of them as individual politician and thus restrains discursive opportunity for personalization, also through decreasing the legitimacy of a personalized focus on one of the councilmen alone. The case of Christoph Blocher (SVP) however can be seen as an example for increased resonance (consonance as well as, maybe even more so, dissonance) and

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[47] The politics of consensus made it impossible for Swiss women to exert the same political pressure as the women`s movement in the United States or other European countries did in the 1960s and 70s. Consequently, gender equality took hold more slowly – the last canton introduced women`s suffrage only in 1990.

visibility of a single politician leading to a more personalized media coverage – this can presumably partly be explained by the media savvy and professional handling of journalists on the side of the SVP. Signs that other parties might pick up on this practice, however, are few.

(2) The part of the political decision-making process in Switzerland, which is taking place publicly is based on pre-formed consensus. Additionally, the concept of consensus can be seen as deeply ingrained in Swiss culture, visible in what Saxer calls "emotional integration" (1992, p. 73) of political actors and journalists. These two factors lead to a high visibility as well as a high legitimacy for consensus in general and can be expected to cause a focus on (symbolic) consensus in the media coverage of political affairs.

(3) The largely institutionalized integration of numerous social and economic groups into the political decision-making process in Switzerland causes a comparatively high visibility of these groups and lends them strong legitimacy and resonance. The presence of these discursive opportunity structures in turn can be expected to lead to the inclusion of a high number of various voices into political media coverage. However, elite sources presumably still dominate Swiss political media coverage, as the inclusion of non-elite sources into the political process is not institutionalized. Non-elite sources therefore receive less discursive opportunity structures.

In summary, the assumptions we have posted thus far regarding the the influences of political system characteristics on the patterns of press coverage of political affairs in the USA, Great Britain, Germany and Switzerland, are as follows:

(1) Personalization can be expected to be high in the US and high and growing in Great Britain but low in Switzerland and Germany.

(2) In Switzerland, a focus on consensus and the integration of dialog is more likely whereas in Great Britain, a focus on conflict can be expected.

(3) Swiss political media coverage focuses more on political issues and substance while US coverage concentrates more on strategy. .

(4) In the US, an emphasis on US-related political events can be expected while due to its geographical location, Swiss media coverage will pay more attention to international and foreign events.

(5) The amount of political coverage in Switzerland can be assumed to be relatively large.

(6) Political media coverage in Great Britain will presumably be characterized by journalistic initiative, negativism and critical coverage towards the government.

(6a) Due to growing governmental attempts at news management beginning in the Thatcher years and increasing during the Blair terms, the opposite could be the case, too: A dominance of government-initiated stories, long soundbites and non-critical media coverage.

(7) As partisanship in Germany has abated during the last decades, political coverage can also be expected to be less partisan today than it was during the 1960s.

(8) The large number of parties in Germany makes a concentration on issue coverage more likely than a focus on political personnel.

(9) Election processes as well as political communication in Germany in general are mostly party-dominated, which presumably leads to less personalization in Germany than in the US.

(10) The process of party building and ideologization currently taking place in the American political landscape on the other hand can be assumed to lead to heightened partisanship in media reporting. Additionally, the polarization of political parties might cause a higher level of negativism in political reporting, partly based on attack statements of political actors.

(11) Due to the comparative closeness between journalists and politicians, and the socialization of Swiss journalists into the consensus system, little advocacy journalism can be expected in Swiss political media coverage. The same is true for critical coverage about the government and a focus on conflict. Coverage integrating citizens` perspective and suggestions towards the government can be expected though.

(12) A high number and broad range of elite sources can be expected in Swiss political coverage, as the integration of the political elite is high. Elite sources, as explained with regard to the consequences of consensus democracy, will encompass a rather broad societal spectrum.

(13) The number of experts as sources in British political media coverage can be expected to have increased over time.

Media system characteristics. Regarding media system characteristics in Hallin & Mancini`s typology, the Liberal and the Democratic Corporatist Model show some similarities as well as some clear distinctions. The Democratic Corporatist Model can be seen as somewhat of a middle model between the Polarized Pluralist and the Liberal Model. It is characterized by an early development of press freedom, high journalistic professionalism and a high degree of formal organization of the media and journalists. With its high circulation rates for daily newspapers and still high (although diminishing) political parallelism, the Democratic Corporatist Model combines the tradition of commentary-oriented journalism also found in the polarized-pluralist model with a growing emphasis on neutral professionalism and information-oriented journalism. Commercial media and politically linked media coexist, and the degree of external pluralism is moderate. In this model, several concepts characteristic for either the Polarized Pluralist or the Liberal Model are similarly pronounced: Political parallelism coexists with professionalization, as does the liberal tradition of press freedom and freedom of information with a strong role of the state.
In the Liberal Model, press freedom and mass-circulation press likewise developed early, yet parallel to a strong rational-legal authority and liberal institutions. Circulation rates are somewhat lower than in the Democratic Corporatist Model. Political parallelism, too, is low, and the press is characterized by internal rather than external pluralism. Whereas in the Democratic Corporatist Model formal organization is stronger than professionalization, in the Liberal Model it is the other way around. Accordingly, information-oriented journalism predominates. Journalistic autonomy is not limited by political pressures or state regulations but rather by commercial influences, as the role of the state is limited in comparison with the strong impact of the market. In the following chapters, the four dimensions which characterize the two models will be explicated more closely, and a description of the situation in each of the analyzed countries will be provided. First, however, the media landscape of the US, the UK, Germany and Switzerland will be introduced to provide the necessary context. Unlike the specific political characteristics described above which can be viewed as rather static since the 1950s, characteristics of the media system and landscape have changed continually during the last decades due to processes of mediatization and transnational

convergence.[48] This makes media system characteristics and their condensation in political media coverage particularly interesting in a comparative view not only across countries but also across time.

USA: Media system and landscape. The USA was the first country to write freedom of the press into its constitution; it was the first country in which the press emerged into a mass medium, and it was also the first country to develop commercial media. Starting from a tradition of newspaper printers as businesspeople, Schudson & Tifft (2005) describe the history of American newspapers as follows:

> Eighteenth-century printers avoided controversy when they could, and printed primarily foreign news because it afforded local readers and local authorities no ground for grumbling. As conflict with England heated up after 1765, politics entered the press, and printerly `fairness` went by the board. It became more troublesome for printers to be neutral than to be partisan; nearly everyone felt compelled to take sides. […] In the same era, the newspaper began its long career as the mouthpiece of political parties and factions. [Around 1900, however,] antiparty reforms and the growing commercial strength of newspapers loosened the hold of parties on the press. (p. 19ff.)

The traditional American publishing dynasties which have dominated the press market for several centuries are dwindling. Today, most papers are owned by large companies, Gannett being the most prominent example of a media conglomerate, under whose roof not just daily newspapers but magazines, TV and radio broadcast stations and even journalism schools are incorporated. As the print circulation rates have been slowly but steadily decreasing since the 1960s, with a 13.5% slide from 2001 through 2008 (PEW Research Center 2008), more and more newspapers adopt a strict business approach to publishing, which helps to cut costs but at the same time of course also has an impact on content and reporting style. About 99% of daily news media receive their news from the two biggest news agencies AP and United Press International (UPI). This leads to a high homogeneity in content especially in local newspapers (Kleinsteuber 2009, p. 1214) which dominate the American press landscape as

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[48] Of course the conduction of politics has changed over time, too. The interest of the present study, however, lies in the visibility of the mediatization process as well as the distinctions between different models of politics and media in media content; some indicators of political professionalization closely linked with media performance (soundbites, character of sources, article trigger) are included in the codebook, a complete examination of the political side can be found in Plasser & Plasser (2002).

national distribution proved to be an impossible feat in the early times of newspaper production. *USA Today*, the first national newspaper was founded in 1981, but until today the largest papers like the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* are mainly known through the syndication of their editorials or comments in numerous regional newspapers. *USA Today* thus has the highest circulation numbers, with the Wall Street Journal, another national publication, a close second and the *New York Times* following somewhat behind (Kleinsteuber 2009, p. 1213). Interestingly, tabloid newspapers are quasi inexistent in the US – Kleinsteuber (2009) sees the explanation for this in the dominance of television regarding entertainment content. Together with the readership, the number of newspapers is also decreasing: In 2007 there were in all 1422 American newspapers, with a total weekday circulation of 50.7 mio. and and about 60% of the population receiving a daily newspaper (PEW Research Center 2008). The time spent reading the newspaper is at an average 40 minutes daily, with older, white, educated males still making up the majority of readers and the time of newspaper use especially among younger people steadily declining (PEW Research Center 2008).

Great Britain: Media system and landscape. The media system in Great Britain can be described as a hybrid between the liberal system in the US and more regulated systems in northern Europe. It combines a commitment to free markets, absolute freedom of speech and self-regulation with historically strong media partisanship, broadcasting regulations and well-funded public service broadcast. England was one of the first European countries to introduce press freedom and abolish censorship, and the notion of media as the Fourth Estate, independent from government, originated here. Until today, the UK has the largest national newspaper press worldwide (Deacon 2004). The British press landscape is also one of the most dynamic worldwide, despite recent losses in readers and advertising revenue. London is home to the most high-circulation newspapers in Europe, and a large number of newspapers compete on a rather small market. While the three largest media groups in the country are broadcasting companies, national and regional newspapers in 2005 also made an overall revenue of 8 billion pound, 61% of it being advertising revenue (Advertising Association 2006)[49]. This, however, does not equal a diversity of content, since a majority of all newspapers are published by only 4 large publishing houses (Guardian Media Directory 2007): The News Corporation of Rupert Murdoch, with a market share of 35.5% (*The Times*

[49] http://www.adassoc.org.uk

is published here), Trinity Mirror with a market share of 20.3% (publishing the *Birmingham Mail* among others), the Daily Mail and General Trust with a share of 19.3% and the Northern and Shell with 11.9%.[50] Unlike in the US the British newspaper market is dominated by national newspapers and characterized by a stratification between three main types of newspapers: Broadsheets, red tops (popular tabloids) and black tops (mid-market papers). However, the boundaries between these different kinds of press have recently been blurring.

There has been a steady decline in newspaper use since 1945, but the situation for national papers has been more or less stable for the last 15 years (Scammell & Semetko 2008): There are 10 national newspapers, five of them quality newspapers, and five of them boulevard papers. Among these, Murdoch`s tabloid *The Sun* is the most read newspaper nationwide, and the Telegraph is the most popular broadsheet in Great Britain. The local and regional papers have not fared as well – their number has been dropping since the 1950s (Seymore-Ure 1996). Today, there are 1310 local and regional newspapers with a weekly circulation rate of 67.1 mio. altogether. Here, five publishing houses are responsible for almost 80% of the circulation.[51] 80.4% of the adult population read a regional newspaper, compared to 61% that read a national daily (GB TGI 2009 Q3)[52]. Still, the regional press is often perceived as rather insignificant especially regarding political and national coverage compared to national newspapers. However, at times it can have an influence on national political issues, namely regarding the perception and demonstration of dissent between the "common people" and the elite. Deacon & Golding (1994) cite local press coverage of the "poll tax" as an example for the initial cognition and representation of a discord between public and elite apprehension of a political issue. What distinguishes Great Britain from other North European countries like

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[50] Other relevant publishing houses are the Telegraph Group with 6.1%, the Guardian Media Group with 4.3% (and the most used newspaper website worldwide) and the Independent Newspapers with 1.8%.

[51] Trinity Mirror with a market share of 16.7%, the Newsquest Media Group with a share of 14.4%, Associated Newspapers with 13.5%, Johnston Press with 13.2% and the Northcliffe Newspapers Group with 11.8%. Other relevant publishing groups in the regional sector are Archant with 4%, the Guardian Media Group with 3.9%, News International Newspapers with 3.5%, The Midlands News Association with 2.9%, and DC Thomson with 2.8%.

[52] http://globaltgi.com

Germany, where television`s margin lies at only 15% (Eurobarometer Survey 2001) is its television`s credibility. It is much higher than public trust in the press (57% vs. 15%). In the UK, television is the most used and most trusted source for (political) news: 68% name it as main source for UK news, whereas only 11% list newspapers.

Germany: Media system and landscape. Newspapers as collections of news first emerged in Germany roughly around 1500. In the 19th century, party press as well as opinion- and interest-based press developed, and in 1916 Alfred Hugenberg founded the first newspaper conglomerate. In the Weimar Republic, however, freedom of the press was not guaranteed and with Hitler's seizure of power, the press was politically aligned. Newspapers were defined as "agencies of public duties" and were used for propaganda purposes. It was not until 1945 that the allies in Western Germany "blacked out" all existing German media and started founding new newspapers and publishing houses. Starting 1949, everyone could obtain a license to start a newspaper business.[53] When the new constitution was written the same year, it was with this history in mind that the freedom of the press was made part of the Basic Law: "Everyone has the right to freely express and spread his opinion in word, writing and pictures and to unobstructedly inform himself through publicly available sources. The freedom of the press and the freedom of coverage through broadcasting and movies are guaranteed. No censorship is taking place" (German constitution, Art.5, Par.1).[54] Today, Germany's press landscape is rather diverse: In 2006, there were 353 daily newspapers, 28 weekly papers and 6 Sunday papers. Together, they have a circulation of 26.96 million (BDZV/Schütz, 10.25.2006).[55] Together, the five largest publishing groups share more than 40% of all circulation for daily newspapers (Media Perspektiven 2006)[56].The Axel Springer

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[53] In Eastern Germany, things went a little differently: Licenses were only given to parties and large organizations so that most press was controlled by the state and the number of newspapers virtually stayed the same throughout the 40 years until German reunification in 1990.

[54] More information and details about the German constitution and the Basic Law can be found on the website of the German government, www.bundesregierung.de.

[55] More information about the German press landscape can be found on the website of the Federal Association of German Newspaper Publishers: www.bdzv.de.

[56] http://www.media-perspektiven.de/1393.html

publishing house, with a market share of 22.5% the largest publishing group in Germany (Media Perspektiven 2006), also publishes the best-selling newspaper in Europe, the *BILD* – Germany`s one true tabloid. It is also the newspaper with the highest circulation rate in Germany, reaching a circulation of more than 3.3 mio. in 2007 (Dreier 2009). In the quality segment, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) and the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ) have the highest circulation rates with 300.000 and 400.000 copies respectively (ibid.).
There are 94 wholesalers specialized in newspapers and magazines in Germany. This particular situation generates several distinctive features for the German press market (Dreier 2009): Fair trade of products published by any publishing house, territory protection for the wholesale traders, obligation to contract and the right to remission for the retail industry. These parameters are implemented to secure press diversity by strengthening the publishing houses as well as to allow for a broad range of print media available to each citizen. The use and geographic coverage of newspapers however has slightly decreased between 2000 and 2005 – from 30 minutes of use per day to 20 minutes per day, and from coverage of 54 percent to only 51 percent (Dreier 2009).

Switzerland: Media system and landscape. As Blum (2005) summarizes in his piece on political journalism in Switzerland, "the state of research regarding political journalism in Switzerland is not good." (p. 116) However, based on historical developments, political system influences and the scant research there is, he defines several stages through which the Swiss press developed from strictly event-focused political reporting in the 18th century on: During the burgeois revolution, decidedly partisan press developed, progressed to advocacy and literary journalism (especially with the development of weekly newspapers) in the 1930s, began to include proactive investigation and research with the establishment of news agency United Press International (UPI) in the 1960s and again changed into the direction of spectacularization with the advent of private television in the 1980s. Professionalization though was slow, and politicians additionally working as journalists and vice versa were a common phenomenon into the 21st century.[57] Switzerland`s media market has long been and

[57] Compare to the Swiss militia system ("Milizsystem") in Swiss politics. Today, most newspapers have a policy against this practice and the Swiss Press Council has judged that independence is an essential precondition for any journalistic work. (Swiss Press Council 1997, p. 88f.)

still is affected by its political federalism. The first newspaper for the entire German-speaking region of Switzerland was published in 1959. Since then, several surges of concentration have taken place, and the three biggest media conglomerates today are the public Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SRG), closely followed by the two commercial corporations Ringier Publishing and Tamedia AG (which also publishes the *Berner Zeitung*) (Meier 2009). The overall number of newspapers has decreased about 40 percent during the last 20 years. The leading regional newspapers, which all publish several zoned editions, are published by the ten largest Swiss newspaper publishers (Meier 2009) and there is no nationally published newspaper. The biggest daily quality newspaper, which is published in the German-speaking part of Switzerland is the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ), published by the Neue Zürcher Zeitung AG with 143.009 copies. With this circulation, it ranks behind the *Südostschweiz* (with a circulation of 428.103 the newspaper with the highest circuclation rate in the German-speaking region), *Blick*, *Tagesanzeiger* and *Berner Zeitung*. Local and regional newspapers still have an advantage of location, mostly due to differences in culture and language between the four main language regions in Switzerland. Increasing mobility however is slowly challenging these geographical and language frontiers.[58] Furthermore, Switzerland is an exceptional case when it comes to internationalization: The Axel Springer AG, a German media conglomerate, controls a noteworthy segment of publications in Switzerland (Meier 2009). Furthermore, many publications in each language region reach beyond the national borders into the border areas of Switzerland`s neighboring countries. Of course this is true as well and probably more so for publications in the border regions of Germany, Italy and France, which broadens competition for Swiss newspapers and assumedly also influences reporting styles.

The development of media markets. Hallin and Mancini propose that the historic process of how the media (e.g. the press) took root and developed in a country plays a role regarding several current aspects of the press in today`s media systems: The historical difference in the development of a mass circulation press is reflected in today`s rates of

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[58] Another type of mobility has created a new and wildly popular phenomenon especially in the bigger cities: The free commuter newspaper. One of them, *20 Minuten*, has even become the newspaper with the highest circulation in Zurich with ca. 1.6 m copies daily.

circulation, in which one can observe a decline from North to South. While newspapers in both regions started out as means of communication for a political elite, with literacy rates especially among ordinary citizens low and with most papers functioning as party organs, the development in the Northern and Southern countries took different routes. Newspapers in the South (e.g. Italy, Spain, Greece) did mostly not evolve into commercial enterprises but were rather supported by political actors. Communication continued to take place amongst an elite engaged in the political world, a phenomenon which Hallin and Mancini call a "horizontal process of debate" (2004, p. 22). In the Northern countries, on the other hand, the press developed into a commercial enterprise. Media catering to a mass audience emerged, and newspapers changed from party mouthpieces to mediators between (political) elites and ordinary citizens – a "vertical process of communication" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 22) developed. According to the distinctions of the process of discourse taking place in or through the press, audience characteristics differ in the North and South. Rooted in political elites, newspaper readership in the South is mostly male, and literacy rates are lower than in the Northern countries, where gender differences in press readership are not as high. Besides the differences in audience orientation and circulation rates, newspaper markets also vary in the degree of separation between quality and tabloid press as well as in their reliance on local, regional or national newspapers. In mainly Southern regions where the press is traditionally aimed at a political elite and sometimes even at particular party members, quality newspapers are prevalent. In the North, in contrast, tabloid newspapers are more common as they cater to a larger, more diverse and less elitist audience. The development of media markets therefore directly influenced national media markets in terms of audience orientation, circulation rates and newspaper types. In the North, newspapers are more strongly audience-oriented and have higher circulation rates, whereas in the South they continue to cater to a rather small, elitist audience.

In close connection with the development of media markets, another phenomenon evolved differently over time in different media systems: Media commercialization took hold faster in markets with an early mass press and high competition. As revenue and attaining the audience`s attention grew in importance, catering to the interests of the broadest possible audience became increasingly important. Articles had to be easy to understand, entertaining and relatable; negative news, scandals and conflicts attracted more readers, as did game-

focused reporting which put the focus on winning and losing, stars and losers, instead of political substance. And while the development of media markets lends itself to a historical analysis but is difficult to capture in media content analysis, the concept of commercialization, which is closely interlinked with the development of media markets, can much better be established by concrete indicators in media content. The development of a media market also allows to make predictions about the level of commercialization, as numerous studies on media content have shown.

State Intervention. State intervention as a dimension relevant for the comparison of media markets is somewhat more tangible than the other three: State intervention in media systems can easily be assessed by examining the state of public service broadcasting in a country, the character of laws or regulations pertaining to the media and the extent of media subsidies. Public service broadcasting in Western democracies is built on starkly varying histories and consequently plays largely varying roles in different countries. Also, the "degree of purity" of the public service broadcasting (p.43), as Hallin & Mancini (2004) call it differs from country to country – in some, dependence on commercial revenue is prevalent even in the public service broadcasting sector, others solely depend on state subsidies or tax money. For the purpose of the present study which concentrates on written media, regulations pertaining to the press are the most relevant form of state intervention. These differ across countries: Definitions of libel, hate speech and privacy vary, as do their penalizations. Concepts of privacy that should be protected from the media are rather broad in some countries and narrow in others. Media concentration and licensing are more or less limited, depending on the country, and the same is true for state financial support. Features of state intervention regarding the press in Western democracies can be summarized in four main points: (1) Freedom of speech and freedom of the press, (2) media laws and regulations, (3) state subsidies and (4) the existence and role of press councils. Following, Germany, Switzerland, the UK and the US will be compared along the lines of these four characteristics; according to Hallin & Mancini`s (2004) models, a higher degree of state intervention can be expected in Germany and Switzerland, the two countries belonging to the Democratic Corporatist Model.

(1) Freedom of speech and freedom of the press

Freedom of speech is integrated into the basic rights in both Germany and Switzerland. The Swiss Federal Constitution includes the right of free speech and information (Art. 16 (1,2,3)). Additionally, censorship is illegal (Art. 17) and "the freedom of the press is guaranteed." (Art. 55) In Germany, Art. 5 of the Basic Law states,

> Everybody has the right to free expression and publication of his opinion in word, writing and picture and the right to obtain information without hindrance from sources generally accessible. The freedom of the press and of reporting by broadcasting and film is guaranteed. There must be no censorship. (Art. 5 (1))

In the US, freedom of the press is integrated into the constitution as First Amendment which states,

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Additionally, the Freedom of Information Act which was introduced in 1966 and readjusted for more effectiveness in 1974 guarantees almost unlimited free access to public documents for all citizens.[59] A slightly different situation presents itself in Great Britain, where freedom of the press long constituted a residual freedom which applies only after most other laws have been accounted for. However, since October 2000, the European Human Rights Convention is included into British Law; it states freedom of information and the media (Art. 10).

(2) Media laws and regulations

In all four countries media laws and regulations are more common and numerous for broadcasting than for the press. Especially in Great Britain there is a pronounced division between the newspaper market and broadcasting: While broadcasting is highly regulated, the press is subject to almost no regulating laws. In the Communications Act 2003, the Office of Communications (Ofcom) was established as media regulation authority attending to broadcasting laws and instances of merging, controlling for example compliance with requirements for public service television to be impartial and balanced, or to refrain from giving any organizational opinion on controversial political matters. The press, on the other hand, is regulated by common or parliament laws, it is limited by laws regarding libel, the dispersion of governmental information, copyright, obscene content & blasphemy, and

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[59] For full text including the *Electronic Freedom of Information Act Amendments* from 1996 see http://www.justice.gov/oip/foia_updates/Vol_XVII_4/page2.htm.

instigation of racial hatred. Another relevant fact is that there are no personal rights since there exists no written constitution guaranteeing any basic rights. This means that there is no guarantee for privacy. The only law that limits coverage of private or personal matters is the Libel Law, which prohibits libelous or slanderous (but not false) reporting.[60] With the public service focus concentrating thus strongly on the broadcast media, the discursive opportunity structures for the British press are assumedly less forced to focus on substantive, objective and diverse reporting. A lack of privacy protection, however, might offer more visibility and legitimacy for personalized reporting. Additionally, the aptly named "Press Complaints Commission" is one more indicator for a rather antagonistic relationship between the British press and the government.

In the US, integrating press freedom as First Amendment into the constitution and thereby barring government from ever passing a bill limiting or otherwise influencing press freedom, prevented the emergence of any national press laws. Media laws exist in the legislation of some individual states[61], mainly focusing on libel and the regulation of ownership to promote competition. This positioning of the principle of press freedom in the first amendment underscores the high importance that is ascribed to the independence of the press and thereby to the concept of objectivity. It also aligns discursive opportunity structures in this direction, imputing high legitimacy to media objectivity. In Switzerland, the extent of press regulation is even less: Only Art. 55a of the Federal Constitution, which is concerned with broadcast media regulation, vaguely calls for the protection of the written press. There is no obligation for any public service for the Swiss press; in the words of Meier & Saxer (1992),

> Swiss media policy thus typifies the democratic paradox of autonomy and obligations which characterize the mass media. The conflicting goals of economy and state apparatus lead to diffuse expectations concerning the public obligations of private enterprises. (p. 225)

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[60] The problem of "privacy and media intrusion" has been addressed frequently by the British government however the official stance regarding its solution is that voluntary self control by the media itself must suffice to control the situation. Since the 1980s, parliament appointed several independent expert commissions with the goal of strengthening rights of privacy against the publishing interests of the media, but no change resulted as of yet.

[61] For more information and an overview see the website of the Media Law Resource center at http://www.medialaw.org/.

State intervention in Germany is somewhat more pronounced. While the German media system was managed by the allies for some time after WWII, not many statements about the media could be integrated when the constitution was written. The press is therefore regulated by Acts of Parliament of the 16 states. It is seen as factor in public opinion building and is therefore obliged to pay special attention to accuracy concerning content and sources of its coverage. A right of reply is guaranteed in all press laws in case of the reporting of false facts; the press law of North-Rine-Westfalia for example states, that "the responsible editor and the publisher of a periodical are obligated to print a counterstatement of persons or institutions which are affected by an allegation made in the periodical." (§11 (1), Press Law of the State of North-Rine-Westfalia 2003).[62] Furthermore, the so-called "Tendenzschutz" (protection of tendency) legally secures that the publisher can define the political line of the newspaper or magazine and can for example include in into employment contracts with journalists (Kleinsteuber & Wilke 1992) - a fact pointing in the opposite direction of the importance of objectivity in the US.

(3) State subsidies

In none of the four countries official state subsidies exist. German and US newspapers are financed by advertising and sales revenue only, all receive favorable treatment in terms of Value Added Tax (VAT) and Swiss newspapers are granted a substantial reduction of transportation costs by the postal service (OECD Report 2007)[63].

(4) Press councils

Press councils for the self-regulation of the media exist in all four countries except the US (Iyengar & McGrady 2007). They do not possess any real sanctioning power in the case of misconduct but function as a symbolic reminder of the willingness of the press to self-regulate and to subscribe to a certain code of media ethics and conduct. A British Press Council was founded in 1947 as institution guiding and controlling the self-regulation of the media. It was

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[62] Wordings of the press laws of all states can be found at http://www.presserecht.de/index.php?option=com_content&task=category&sectionid=4&id=14&Itemid=26.

[63] Full text can be found here: http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/download/0107071e.pdf?expires=1378051470&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=440B80F72B42C5E165D8CB45F5E91539

replaced in 1991 by the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) whose main task it is to protect the public (including political, governmental or celebrity actors) from excessive media behavior, since especially boulevard journalism often tends to exploit the legal circumstances described above when reporting on the royal house as well as on other politicians and celebrities. The German Press Council is jointly operated by several large publisher associations and journalist unions. Everyone can file complaints with the Press Council regarding media coverage, who then can express its disapproval or, in harsh cases, give a reprimand to the respective publication, which this then has to publish. In 1973, a German press code was compiled, listing 16 media principles, among them references to truthful reporting, stating that "[r]especting the truth, protecting human dignity and truthfully informing the public are the sovereign imperatives of the press" and that "[u]nconfirmed information, rumors and speculation have to be indicated as such" (German Press Council 1996, p. 3). Another focus lies on a ban on discrimination of any kind and the respect of privacy, and, interestingly, on the danger of sensationalism, as the following two quotes illustrate: "The press abstains from picturing violence and brutality in inappropriately sensationalist ways" and "Regarding the coverage of medical issues, inappropriately sensationalist coverage which could inspire unfounded fears or hopes in a reader should be avoided." (German Press Council 1996, p. 4f.) The rather high expectations regarding the press as public information organ which these quotes illustrate, as well as the consequential press laws and code of conduct, lead us to expect political media coverage in Germany to focus more on political substance than on scandal, emotion or drama. Especially sensationalism will probably be low in German coverage if one assumes that the press heeds the directives of the Press Council. A dominance of elite sources is likely, again caused by the public service expectations towards the press which ascribe higher legitimacy to established than to non-established sources. However, partisan reporting can as well be expected to be visible due to the protection of tendency. The Swiss Press Council refers to very similar principles of conduct, but without the emphasis on sensationalization. Instead, however, references to journalistic commentary and plurality of opinions are included, instructing journalists to "defend freedom of information and the resulting rights, the freedom of commentary and criticism as well as the independence and reputation of your occupation" but adding that it be necessary that "journalists make sure that the audience is able to distinguish between facts and comments or critical evaluations". Additionally, the code states that "a

plurality of opinions contributes to the defense of the freedom of information" (Swiss Press Council 2008)[64]. With this code of conduct as basis, Swiss political coverage can be expected to set value on political commentary as well as a plurality of opinions.

Political parallelism. A second historical process which Hallin and Mancini include into their model is the development and continuance of political parallelism out of an originally explicit political allegiance of newspapers. Hallin and Mancini utilize the concept of political parallelism to more closely describe the degree to which journalists` news coverage parallels political beliefs or party objectives. It was first introduced by Seymor-Ure (1974), who labeled it "party-press-parallelism"; Blumer and Gurevitch (1975) in their subsequent work describe it as "the degree to which the structure of the media system paralleled that of the party system" (p. 27). Sequentially, the concept was broadened to political parallelism, adapting to more modern times, "where media are still differentiated politically, (but) they more often are associated not with particular parties, but with general political tendencies" (p. 27). Patterson & Donsbach (1993) list six indicators of political parallelism: Media content, organizational connections, a tTendency for media personnel to be active in political life, a tendency for career paths of journalists to be shaped by their political affiliations, partisanship of media audiences and specific journalistic role orientations and practices: Publicist vs. objective reporter, writing style and organization of journalistic labor.

The present study provides an empirical analysis of the condensation of political parallelism in media content, using an adaptation of the approach taken by Wilke & Reinemann (2001) examining the media evaluation of candidates during election campaign. However, all six factors are closely linked and mutually influential. Organizational connections refer to the ties between media organizations and political organizations like parties or the government. Originally, these ties were strong as newspapers evolved from party organs, but with the growing importance of commercial media especially in Northern countries, they are eroding. Few newspapers have such close connections to political organizations as to receive exclusive information, and few parties have such an influence on a paper as to be able to publicize their political view on things exclusively. The tendency for media personnel to be active in political life also originated within the first newspapers, which were often established by the parties

[64] The full text in all languages can be found here: http://presserat.ch/code.htm

themselves and therefore written by party members or at least party supporters. It retains some importance especially in Southern European countries, where party members or even heads of state own whole media organizations, as well as in countries where it is not political personnel starting a newspaper but rather media personnel starting to become active in politics by using their publicist influence (for example Rupert Murdoch in the US). More common today is the tendency for the career paths of journalists to be shaped by their political affiliation: Since many newspapers implicitly often still lean towards a certain political direction which is known to the audience as well as its staff, the choice of employment on the side of the journalist as well as the media organization is often not independent from political beliefs or opinions. In a similar regard, newspaper audiences might still tend towards a certain political direction and chose "their" newspaper according to these leanings. However, this external pluralism is not equally pronounced in any country. Rather, regions in which political parallelism is still strong tend towards a certain degree of external pluralism, meaning that most media outlets can be matched to a specific political tendency. In contrast, in countries in which political parallelism is low, media pluralism is more likely to express itself internally, that is within each media outlet (Hallin & Mancini 2004). This means that instead assigning one political leaning to a newspaper each newspaper strives to include various political beliefs into its coverage. Clearly, this distinction does not only have to do with political parallelism, but can to a similar degree be linked with the commercial character of a media market – if media function as commercial enterprises, they need to maximize their audience by catering to numerous different beliefs without preferring any of them. A good example for a media system characterized more strongly by internal pluralism are the United States, where the better part of media outlets makes an effort to include various political opinions into its coverage.

Regarding political parallelism, the governance of public broadcasting is, as least in those countries in which public media exist, one more important aspect since public broadcasting can be influenced more or less strongly by the government or political parties, depending on the way it is controlled. On a final note, it needs to be said that the distinction between different degrees of political parallelism does not mean that commercial media cannot be partisan, nor does it mean that non-commercial media cannot report objectively. It is important to keep in mind that "news incorporates political values, which arise from a range

of influences, from routines of information gathering to recruitment patterns of journalists and shared ideological assumptions of the wider society" (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p. 26).
Most German newspapers have an implicit political leaning. Besides the tabloid BILD, several opinion leading papers can be identified across the political spectrum: The Frankfurter Rundschau as well as the Sueddeutsche Zeitung (SZ) represent the left range on the political scale – with them, the smaller tageszeitung (taz), which is openly leftist, merits mentioning. The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) and the Welt occupy more conservative positions (for a comparison with party attitudes see Donsbach 1993). For these important national papers, significant journalistic and social influence can be assumed (Wilke 1998, p.302). While the political leaning of the press is rooted in the country's tradition and history of party press and interest-driven publications, open editorial endorsements of political candidates are rare. But the long tradition of party membership as well as political parallelism increases the visibility of parties as well as the legitimacy of partisan media coverage in Germany – a higher amount of political parallelism in media coverage than in the US is therefore likely. The still high level of press-party parallelism (Pfetsch 2004) in Germany also goes together with a distance between the news media and politicians that is rather small –journalists and political actors exist in a more or less consensual symbiosis. This close relationship between media and politics which can also be observed in Switzerland lowers the legitimacy of media coverage critical or negative of government or politics in general and thus makes this type of coverage less likely. It also becomes apparent in the fact that party representatives are members of the board for all public broadcasting channels, and the history of a close party-press relationship additionally prevents the development of a strongly antagonistic relationship between journalists and politicians as can be observed in the United States. While certainly assigned a control function, media in Germany therefore fall behind their U.S. counterpart in terms of watchdog-mentality – a larger distance between politicians and journalists usually causes more reliance on frames of strategy and accountability than present in a "small distance"-communication culture (Esser & D`Angelo 2006, p.50). In line with this, the media landscape is characterized by external rather than internal pluralism, editorial lines are often politically motivated, and the self-concept of journalists relies not only on conveying neutral information, but also on the explanation and interpretation of complex issues (see Weischenberg et al. 2005). This role perception can be traced back to the long tradition of journalists as political commentators during the times of the press as party organs

- and its emphasis on explanation and interpretation of political events increases the discursive opportunities (especially legitimacy) for interpretive and opinionated coverage. However, a trend towards the concept of objectivity could lead to discursive opportunity structures favoring implicit instead of explicit commentary - a concept Berkel (2006) introduced in her analysis of conflict in the European public sphere to assess the possible non-explicit integration of interpretation or opinion in political media coverage.
In the US, public support for both parties remained more or less balanced since the 1920s. Since Civil War times, however, parties have gone through various changes. They lost public trust and their importance diminished during the 1960s and 1970s due to the rise of civic movements and political action committees as well as the Watergate scandal and the rising relevance of polls and television, which absorbed much of the mediation between politicians and citizens that the parties had carried before. Subsequently, however, the alteration of campaign finance laws on the federal level, the growing importance of political PR and the rise of the religious right induced a polarization and ideologization of the parties which garnered them more support once again. Party organizations evolved into election campaign headquarters focused on boosting their candidate`s political prospects; party events on the national level, especially the national conventions in which traditionally the party`s candidate as well as the party platform are announced, transformed into public spectacles receiving much media attention (for a more detailed discussion of the professionalization of election campaigning see Plasser & Plasser 2002). This professionalization of political and election campaigning can be expected to cause a higher visibility and resonance of staged events, in turn leading to a higher coverage of staged events in political media content, with dissonance possibly causing an amount of self-referential reporting on the side of the media.

While the American press landscape is characterized mainly by internal pluralism, there are political leanings that can be observed in the larger quality newspapers (see figure 4).[65]

[65] For for the empirical purposes of this paper the concepts of "political bias" (as Gentzkow & Shapiro as well as Groseclose & Milyo put it) and "political leaning" of a newspaper can be seen as identical. For an assessment of American media`s partisanship from a European perspective, see for example Donsbach 1993.

Liberal		**Conservative**
(Washington Times)	Washington Post	(Washington Times)
	LA Times	(Wall St. Journal)
	New York Times	
	(Wall St. Journal)	

Note. Adapted from Gentzkow, M. & Shapiro, J.M. (2006), What drives media slant? Evidence from U.S. daily newspapers. NBER Working Paper Series, Working Paper No. 12707 and Groseclose, T., & Milyo, J. (2005), A measure of media bias. Quarterly Journal of Economics, 120(4), 1192-1237.

Figure 4. Political Leanings of National US Newspapers

Other papers, like USA Today, Washington Times or the Wall Street Journal are not as easily classified – the two studies which are the source of the above table for example assign completely different profiles to both papers. The reasons for this are twofold: The Wall Street Journal, on the one hand, provides more or less neutral reporting overall, with the exception of its editorial pages, which have a strong conservative slant. USA Today, on the other hand, does not adhere to a specific political line, rather, it is characterized by temporal change as well as internal diversity regarding its political views – a typical feature of media in the Liberal Model which can also be found in most regional and local dailies. An additional facet which requires consideration when analyzing political parallelism in the US is the role which the early orientation towards commercialism and "objective" reporting assume: The long-standing and consistent relevance of these two concepts for American political journalism also results in a distinctive skepticism towards media partisanship. As Strömbäck and Kaid (2008) observe,

> the issue about partisan bias is considered as more important, while also more hotly debated, in countries that form part of the Liberal Model, simply because partisan bias is not considered legitimate in such countries. This issue appears to generate the most controversy in the United States […], despite evidence showing that partisan bias is rather uncommon in the US news media […]. (p. 7)

The perceived illegitimacy of partisan reporting in the United States is not least visible in the terminology which dominates most US-centered research (and also Strömbäck & Kaids discussion) about the topic: Rarely, one finds studies conducted on partisans reporting, media partisanship or political leaning. Instead, research focuses on "media bias", "media slant" or

"political bias" – expressions which signify not simply party allegiance or legitimate preference of one political party over another, but a distortion of facts. This, together with the comparatively low relevance and therefore low visibility of political parties can be presumed to lead to low partisan reporting, but might also increase the visibility of and resonance towards a variety of perspectives uncommon in countries with more partisan coverage. Furthermore, the high relevance of individual political actors can be expected to create discursive opportunities in favor of personalization.

In Great Britain, the conservative party is the most long-lived party, and unlike most other European political parties oriented towards the right, it has never relied on a large rural vote or on notions of nationalism, although the geographical divide between urban (Labour) and rural (Conservatives) areas has become more pronounced in recent years. The Labour Party adopted an official party constitution in 1918 and, as a party emerging parallel to a growing working class, stated commitment to the redistribution of wealth, full employment and public ownership. From its beginnings on, Labour has been closely affiliated with the trade unions, which have also long provided most of its financial support. Until today, equality, redistribution, public service and social justice make up important traditional key values of Labour policies. An aspect which merits attention regarding the British political system is the particular relationship between the government and the media. As in other countries, government has certain imminent advantages as information provider, as it provides expertise as well as routine access for journalists, two factors which constitute legitimacy for sources (Riddell 1998). Especially if one assumes that the effort journalists put into the acquisition of sources is not too intense (Negrine 1996), indexing (Bennet 1990), or, as Kuhn (2007) calls it, the government as "primary definer" for the news media (p. 182) can be rather common. Bernard Ingham and Alastair Campbell, press secretaries in the Thatcher and Blair government respectively, made history as the two most effective governmental media managers until today. During Thatcher`s reign, twice daily lobby-meetings were held with select journalists. Until 2000, those press meetings took place off the record, and only 2002 they were opened up to a wider selection of media. Thus, by providing certain journalists with insider information and giving them an advantage over their peers, accredited journalists were made part of the government`s news management (Franklin 1998) and thereby effectively controlled. However, at times protest against the manipulative use of these press briefings

emerged, and leaks as well as the counter-influence of non-governmental sources could get in the way of the government`s media plans. Still, Ingham had set an example of effective management of the media, and when Blair took over party leadership of Labour in 1994, with him strategies of professional news management were introduced and eventually led to a landslide in the 1997 general election (Esser, Reinemann & Fan 2000). According to Franklin (2001), New Labour`s relationship with the media was characterized by (1) centralization, (2) professionalization and (3) politicization. Press secretary Campbell established a Strategic Communications Unit, and was able to not only give orders to civil servants (a novelty) but could also replace ministerial press officers. And he did so, mainly by exchanging too neutral officers with more partisan ones and by employing several former journalists. The government additionally assigned special advisors for departments to manage media relations (Scammell & Horropp 2001), and steadily developed a kind of exchange relationship with certain media, especially with the Murdoch empire. Bit by bit, what Davis (2002) calls a "public relations democracy" with an almost presidential (Foley 2000) Blair at its center, emerged.[66] Accordingly, journalists fancied Campbell`s perceived closeness to the Prime Minister (Hennessy 2000) which gave him an additional advantage. Secondarily, the New Labour government developed new strategies to deal with the media: It contacted local newspapers directly, to ensure firsthand and mostly unmediated coverage, and it used tactics like firebreaking, milking a story, pre-empting or "pre-buttals" to manage news (Barnett & Gaber 2001, 106ff.).[67] By 2000, however, the novelty of the New Labour government and its media strategies wore off, and the relationship between government and media again became more conflicted. In 2004, an Independent Review of Government Communications even resulted in the "Phillis Report"[61], which stated that there was too little trust between politicians, the media and the public and which listed several recommendations for the government-media relationship. Critics of the report however characterize it as simply strengthening the government`s communication power. In any case, the strong governmental emphasis on news management, beginning in the Thatcher years and intensifying with the

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[66] A process which Helms (2008) warns about in parliamentary (i.e. non-presidential) democracies as it could be expected to lead to "legislative gridlock and government instability" (p. 54) – to assess this concern, it would be interesting to compare the public perception and political efficacy of New Labour before and after 2000, for example.

[67] For a more detailed description of these tactics, see Barnett & Gaber 2001.

terms of the Blair government can be assumed to tilt the discursive opportunity structures regarding British political media coverage in direction of higher visibility of and resonance towards government-initiated messages and staged events. This can be expected to lead to a higher level of government-initiated reporting and long soundbites. Government behavior perceived as media manipulation, on the other hand, might at the same time lead to dissonance and a higher level of coverage critical towards the government. This creates a situation in which, as Scammell & Semetko (2008) explain, "[n]ational newspapers, especially the popular tabloids, are highly opinionated, pick sides and push agendas; they are powerful and overt political players, willing and at times apparently able to shape the agenda and make or break political careers." (p. 74) And indeed, like most European press but contrasting to one main feature of the Liberal Model which Great Britain belongs to, British newspapers have a history of political parallelism – the Daily Herald, the last paper formally connected to a party, was only closed down in 1964, and even since then, newspapers have tended to support either Labour or Conservatives. Before 1997, the majority of daily newspapers backed the Conservative party, to the extent that press support was stronger than actual support in votes (for example 72% vs. 43% in 1987, Kuhn 2007). Especially in times of crises during the Thatcher government, newspaper partisanship was intense (Seymour-Ure 1992), and today the percentage of newspapers supporting one of the two biggest parties surpasses the respective party`s support in the popular vote (see table 4). The one change is that since 1997 and the advent of Blair as Labour party leader, press support has tended to favor Labour. The one party that, again, is disadvantaged by this situation are the Liberal Democrats, who regularly receive less press support than popular votes – a sign of the close, historically conditioned linkage persisting between media and political system.

Table 4

Newspaper Partisanship vs. Election Votes in Great Britain

	Conservatives		**Labour**		**Liberal Democrats**	
	Newspaper partisanship	***Votes***	***Newspaper partisanship***	***Votes***	***Newspapers partisanship***	***Votes***
1964	57%	43%	42%	44%	0%	11%
1992	64%	42%	27%	34%	5%	18%
2005	41%	33%	54%	36%	2%	23%

Recently, there have been signs of a realignment in newspaper partisanship (Deacon, Golding & Billig 1998), which not only entailed the better part of the press switching support in favor of Labour but also caused newspaper partisanship to become more conditional, more volatile, more personalized, more issue-oriented, and more pluralistic (Kuhn 2007). McNair (2000) sees the reasons for the changes in favor of the Labour party in four factors:

(1) The Labour party became more politically central and, with Blair, had a dominant leading figure

(2) Labour began cooperating with the media, especially with the Murdoch empire

(3) Within the Labour party, professional news management especially for carrying out attacks was established

(4) The electoral and popular success of the Labour party caused it to become a more commercially interesting subject for the media

Since 2005 though support for Labour has been declining again, and the novel conditionality of press support seems to rear its head. In addition, there has been a "decline of the single editorial voice" (Seymour-Ure 1998, p. 43), making it possible for one newspaper to endorse several political parties or movements at the same time. This practice also facilitates the broadening of a paper`s appeal, which is in line with British journalistic culture`s pronounced orientation towards the audience as well as the characteristically low relevance of political parallelism in the Liberal Model. Still, Great Britain`s unique combination of a long history of political parallelism with a de facto two-party system and relative programmatic consistency of the two biggest parties can be expected to lead to discursive opportunity structures generally favoring heavily partisan reporting. Studies showing a trend towards more commercially oriented (and by that, less partisan) coverage however could point towards a decline in partisan reporting over the last decades due to a slow change of discursive opportunity structures over time.

In Switzerland, contrary to the role of the national political parties, political journalism and political tendencies and affiliations of newspapers have traditionally been strong. Printers began publishing political news during the 17th century, under censorship, and without including any "editorial" commenting (Kuhn & Neveu 2002). Beginning with the bourgeois revolution in 1798 however, numerous new papers began to develop, each supporting a different group in the revolution, and partisan reporting had found its beginning. The political

and partisan affiliation of the press persisted, and only in the 1960s, newspapers began detaching themselves from politics. Ticino, with its proximity to Italy (of the Polarized Pluralist Model), was the last canton whose press disassociated itself from the political parties. This longstanding history of political parallelism led not only to rather high standards in political coverage for example regarding extensive coverage of parliamentary discussions, it also caused the process of professionalization to occur comparatively late (Blum 2005). Today, the variety and intensity of partisan reporting is less strong, and newspapers are financially and structurally independent from political parties. However, many do favor a political tendency (see table 5), and the lesser visibility of political parties, coupled with the legitimacy of subjective, interpretive reporting, will likely lead to a similar amount of partisan reporting in Switzerland as in Germany. Despite the earlier cited official documents regarding the duties of the Swiss press as commentator, studies have shown that Swiss journalists on the other hand do not view themselves as advocates or political commentators as much as as neutral mediators or analysts (Marr et al. 2001) – similar as with the concept of objectivity, however, the question is in how far journalistic self-images concur with the content and style of media coverage that can be observed. Many factors which for example Hallin & Mancini (2004) assume to be influential for the character of political media coverage are not at all explicit features of day-to-day journalistic work and in many cases will not even be consciously noticed by the writers (nor by the citizens or even politicians, either).

Table 5

Political Leanings of Swiss Newspapers

Left	**Left-liberal**	**Center**	**Conservative-liberal**	**Conservative/ right-wing**
Wochenzeitung Le Courier	Blick Tages-Anzeiger L`Hebdo	Berner Zeitung Le Temps Südostschweiz	Neue Zürcher Zeitung Corriere del Ticino	Schweizerzeit Il Mattino della domenica

Note. Adapted from Blum (2005).

An analysis by Blum (2005) which aims at testing Blumler & Gurevitch`s model about influences on media coverage (the precursor and role model to Hallin & Mancini`s models), provides additional valuable insights into the relationship between media and politics in Switzerland: Instead of political parallelism, he examines the distance of the relationship

between journalists and politicians, arguing that the integration of the political elite is comparatively high in Switzerland as the distance between journalists and politicians is rather small. This is due, as explicated earlier, to the small size of the country, in which one is likely to meet in numerous different contexts[68] (Jarren & Donges 2002), but also, Blum (2005) says, because Swiss journalists tend to prioritize civic duties over journalistic considerations. As an example he mentions the fact that the Swiss media

> […] advocate compromise, although conflict and quarreling would correspond much better to the media rules of attention. They support the integration of the Swiss People`s Party (SVP) into the Federal Council although their opposition would provide much more content and headlines. They avow themselves to the Swiss political system, although the competitive system, with its high personalization, dramatization and horse-race-orientation would accommodate media logic much better. (p. 125)

Following this analysis, characteristics of media logic can be assumed to occur less in Swiss political media coverage than in the political coverage of other countries, due to Swiss journalists` adherence to principles of the Swiss political system which create discursive opportunity structures favorable of political rather than media logic. Furthermore, it can be stated in general that the level of political parallelism might be somewhat stronger in Switzerland than in Germany and the US, and that while political parties do not play an important role like they do in Germany, for example, the journalistic solidarity with the political powers that be is still high.

In summary, the influences of media system characteristics in the USA, Great Britain, Germany and Switzerland on political media content can be summarized as follows:
(1) The objectivity norm in reporting is most prevalent in the US, lower in Great Britain, even less so but increasing in Germany and low in Switzerland.
(2) Due to their history of political commentary journalism, the focus on analysis is stronger in the Democratic Corporatist countries than in the countries of the Liberal Model.
(3) The variety of perspectives given in articles is higher in the US and Switzerland than in Germany.
(4) Personalization is high in the US and increasing in Great Britain and Germany (somewhat lower than in Great Britain) but low in Switzerland.

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[68] However in 1996, the Swiss Press Council published a regulation which limits the possibilities for journalists to become active in politics (Swiss Press Council 1997).

(5) Partisan reporting is common though decreasing in Great Britain, still high but decreasing in Germany, visible to a slightly lesser part in Switzerland, and less common but growing in the US.
(6) Negativism in political reporting is increasingly high in the US, high in Great Britain, less so in Switzerland and even fewer in Germany.
(7) Focus on conflict is common in Great Britain and even growing the US, less so in Germany and not likely at all in Swiss coverage.
(8) Critical or aggressive coverage of the government is most likely in Great Britain but not expected in Germany or Switzerland.
(9) Established sources can be expected to dominate the coverage in Germany and Switzerland.
(10) Opinionated reporting can be expected in Germany and Switzerland and, to a lesser degree, Great Britain.
(11) US and British coverage will include a higher number of staged events than in the other two countries, short soundbites and media self-references will be more frequent in US coverage than in coverage in the other three countries.
(12) In Great Britain, strategically framed coverage can be expected, issue-focus will be low.
(13) In Germany, issue frames as well as analytical and interpretive coverage are likely.
(14) In Switzerland, a focus on dialogue and consensus can be expected.
(15) Sensationalism can be expected to be low in Germany.

The Meso-Level: National and Regional Newspapers

After we have until now examined various relevant influences on the characteristics and patterns of political press coverage in different Western democracies over time on the macro-level of systemic political and media context, we will now move to the next, so to say, level of influence on characteristics of political press coverage based on the Structural-individualistic model: The organizational, or meso-level. The organizational environment with its structures, rules and requirements is a force whose impact on journalists and their work is much more directly accessible and easier relatable than the more abstract, indirect systemic influences which a media or political system has on journalistic work and thus political media coverage patterns. On the meso-level, different types of media organizations can be seen as influential factors for the character of political media content. In the case of the

press, the most significant distinction is the distinction between regional and national newspapers, whose probable impact on patterns of political press coverage we will now examine more closely. The separation between national and regional newspapers in insofar an interesting and most relevant phenomenon for the present study, as it can be found in every Western democracy. The eight newspapers analyzed in the present thesis consist of one typical regional and one national quality newspaper per country. In Germany, we examined the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) and the *Rheinische Post* (RP), in Switzerland the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ) and the *Berner Zeitung* (BZ), in Great Britain *The Times* and the *Birmingham Mail* and in the US the *New York Times* (NYT) and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. In the four countries analyzed in this study, the two types of newspapers occupy slightly varied roles in the media landscape – regional papers are dominant on the US media market and also prevalent in Switzerland, where due to the different regions and multilingualism no truly national newspaper exists, but for example rather insignificant for the British press landscape, especially recently. But the differing expectations which are connected to each type of newspaper are similar in all four countries. The consequentially differing assumptions regarding the character of each newspaper type`s coverage are demonstrated very vividly in the German term of "supra-regional quality newspapers" (überregionale Qualitätszeitungen), which is often used interchangeably with "national newspaper". Often, the term is even shortened to "quality newspapers", which Raabe (2006) defines as "those subscription newspapers in Germany which are distributed supra-regionally respectively nationally […]." (p. 236) This notion of quality newspapers implies high standards regarding content: Elaborate political information (Wilke 1998) as well as relevance and contextualization (Haller 2003) are expected from quality newspapers, which implies less strict standards for the non-quality papers. Often, circulation and revenue of national newspapers is higher than that of the smaller regional papers, which ensures the provision of more financial (and accordingly, human) resources. Thus, working conditions at national newspapers are comparatively good and journalists working there are comparatively well educated and competent. Due to these higher standards which national newspapers are expected to fulfill, due to the better working conditions, financing, as well as better educated staff, we expect the structure of discursive opportunities to facilitate coverage in national newspapers to be more in-depth, to provide more contextual information and to contain less personalization.

Regarding the national quality papers, all four selected newspapers are the respective most important national (or, in Switzerland, supra-regional) quality newspapers. In the US and Great Britain, this selection was rather simple as the number of quality national papers is low and the *New York Times* and *The Times* are with no doubt the most well-known and respected daily national newspapers in their countries as well as internationally, the *NYT* even being the official newspaper of record in the US. In Switzerland, the choice was similarly easy as the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* is the only non-regional newspaper. While it is not published across all of Switzerland, it does cover the complete German-speaking part (and some Swiss as well as foreign border-regions as well) of Switzerland and is well respected across the Swiss borders for its in-depth international coverage (Meyer & Schanne 1994). The selection was most difficult in Germany, where two daily national quality newspapers of similar size exist: The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*. Due to its more prominent presence in previous media research and its more similar orientation to the other analyzed quality newspapers, we chose the *FAZ*. The four papers all fulfill similar functions in the respective countries, but their circulation is diverse: The Swiss *NZZ* is the smallest of the four with a daily circulation of 143.009, followed by the German *FAZ* with 373.393. The British *Times* is located somewhere in between with a daily circulation of 584.378, still way below the American *NYT* which has a daily circulation of 1.086.798.[69] Of course these numbers have to be set in relation to the size of the different countries and their populations. All four publications are located on a similarly moderate political range between conservative (*FAZ*), conservative-liberal (*NZZ*)[70], center-right (*Times*) and moderate-center (*NYT*).

Regional newspapers, on the other hand, usually possess low financial and human resources – a fact that can lead to less well-researched articles and less in-depth political coverage in general (Teichert 1982). Political coverage in regional newspapers can thus be expected to be less in-depth than in national newspapers. For the regional newspapers in the analysis, the selection was not quite as self-evident as their variety in all four countries is much higher;

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[69] All numbers from Internationales Handbuch Medien (2009).

[70] Until 1988, the advisory board of the NZZ consisted only of members of the Liberal party (FDP). This is not the case anymore however the paper has maintained a certain bond to liberalism (in the European sense). For a more detailed discussion of this development see Blum (2005, 2006).

thus we decided to select especially typical regional daily newspapers. All four regional papers have a long tradition in the respective countries and have outlasted several mergings, and all four rely mainly on subscriptions. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* is probably the most prominent of the four, being founded by Joseph Pulitzer and published by the Pulitzer family until 2005 (since then it has been published by Lee Enterprises and all members of the Pulitzer family have retreated from the Advisory board). It serves the greater St. Louis area and has at the time of writing a daily circulation of 240.796. The *Birmingham Mail* (*Birmingham Evening Mail* until 2005) is one of the biggest selling regional newspapers in Great Britain with a daily circulation of 67.321 (Audit Bureau of Circulation 2008) – this number already makes clear how insignificant the role of regional and local newspapers in Britain is compared to the other three countries. It is also the only newspaper in the sample which could be described as tabloid or populist, a typical feature of British regional dailies, and serves the greater Birmingham area. The two German-speaking regional papers, the *Berner Zeitung* (originating from a fusion of the *Berner Nachrichten* and the *Berner Tagblatt* in 1977) and the *Rheinische Post*, both belong to the best-selling regional dailies in Switzerland and Germany with a daily circulation of 212.648 (Tamedia AG 2008) and 429.301(IVW 2008) respectively. The regional papers cover a somewhat broader political spectrum (although they are more difficult to classify due to their lesser amount of and interest in political coverage) from liberal (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*) to neutral-populist (*Birmingham Mail*) and center-right (*Berner Zeitung* and *Rheinische Post*). Regional newspapers fulfill functions of identification, orientation and opinion building in narrow political areas (Lang 2003) and the connection to their place of publication is a superior goal (Wilke 1998). Coverage in regional newspapers can therefore be expected to relate more closely to the audience than coverage in national newspapers. At the same time, regional papers do not exhibit the same financial independence as most national newspapers, as they usually cross-finance their editorial content with advertising revenue (Heinrich & Lobigs 2006). They could thus be expected to follow commercial logic more closely than national newspapers. At the same time, local journalists are embedded more closely into the social network of their region, which might cause them to shy away from confrontation or conflict with local political actors (Wilking 1990) and could presumably lead to a more sacerdotal approach to politics, characterized by less journalistic initiative and more reliance on established, respected sources (Teichert 1982). The close connection of regional newspapers

and their journalists to their place of publication therefore means a stronger national focus as well as a more sacerdotal coverage of politics than in national newspapers. Overall, our assumptions regarding the influence of different organizational newspaper types on political press coverage can be summarized as follows:

(1) Due to their higher dependence on advertising revenue, commercial logic can be expected to be more dominant in regional than in national newspapers.

(2) Due to their lower financial and human resources, political coverage in regional newspapers can be expected to be less in-depth than in national newspapers.

(3) The close connection to the place of publication means a stronger national focus of the regional newspapers as well as a more sacerdotal coverage of politics than in national newspapers.

(4) As they fulfill functions of identification and orientation, coverage in regional newspapers can be expected to be closer to the audience than coverage in national newspapers.

(5) Due to the higher standards which national newspapers are expected to fulfill, due to better working conditions, financing, as well as better educated staff, coverage in national newspapers will be more in-depth, will provide more contextual information and less personalization.

The above survey of the individual characteristics of national and regional daily newspapers, while not exhaustive, forms the basis for an explorative comparison of the impact of the organizational meso-level on political press coverage. From this level, we now move to the third level suggested by the Structural-individualistic Model as influential for the character of media coverage: The individual, or micro-level. On this level, we examine factors directly relating to and influencing the subjective perceptions and behavior of journalists as press content producers - namely cultural and normative forces impacting and defining the journalistic profession. The following subchapter thus deals with the role of political communication culture, journalistic norms and journalistic role-conception as influence on political media coverage.

An Approximation Towards the Micro-Level: Political Communication Culture, Journalistic Norms and Journalistic Role Conceptions

Political communication culture, journalistic norms and journalistic role-conceptions possess a close connection to the cultural macro-level (Hallin & Mancini 2004): Certain

journalistic norms and role-conceptions can be assumed to be interwoven into the cultural fabric of any country, based on their relevance and tradition – while their actual enforcement and much of the negotiation about the relevance of specific aspects might take place on the organizational and individual level, these two factors are nonetheless placeable within the larger context of each country. Political communication culture as well describes a territorial, that is, a national phenomenon. Referring to Seitz (2006), we view political communication culture as objective fact, not as moral concept, which implies a historical-hermeneutic rather than an empirical approach (p. 54) and allows the a priori use of aspects of political communication culture for analysis and interpretation of the examined countries and their political media content. We will hence include implications of political communication culture, journalistic norms and journalistic role conceptions to help deduce further assumptions about national characteristics of political press coverage for empirical assessment: Certain assumptions regarding political communication culture, journalistic norms and journalistic role-conceptions can be ascribed to each analyzed country – an aggregation, if you will, of individual effects onto the national layer, following Reinemann`s (Reinemann & Huismann 2007) assumption of mutual influence of macro-, meso- and micro-level. Thus, our theoretical and empirical analysis will continue to concentrate on the discrimination between countries, while a more detailed assessment of organizational and individual differences visible in political media content of various countries, while it cannot be executed in the scope of this study, is available in further research, see for example Hanitzsch (2009).

Political communication culture. Political culture as a territorial phenomenon is greatly useful in any comparison of countries. The following description of political culture by Blum et al. (2006) provides a useful subsumption:

> Political culture is a social fact which is predetermined and into which people are born and socialized. Members of a collective are usually not aware of it but rather perceive it as natural and self-evident. […] Political culture consists of fundamental beliefs about what politics is. It defines the limits within which political thought and action take place, and it determines the essential non-political and non-ideological values of politics. Thus, political culture permits understanding among political or ideological opponents. (p. 52)

Based on the concept of political culture and on the political culture research especially conducted by Almond & Verba in *Civic Culture* (1965), Blumler & Gurevitch introduced

political communication culture into the field of communication research in 1977. Political communication culture is part of the political culture of a country, and Pfetsch (2004) defines political communication culture as "the empirically observable orientations of actors in the system of production of political messages toward specific objects of political communication, which determine the manner in which political actors and media actors communicate in relation to their common political public." (p. 348) She goes on to formulate an application of the concept of political communication culture to comparative political media research, which provides a very useful supplement for the framework of the present study and shall therefore be explicated in the following.

Pfetsch (2004) begins with the assumption that

> political communication is to be regarded in comparative approaches as a system that has a structural and a cultural dimension. The structure of political communication involves the institutional conditions of the political system and the media system at the macrolevel and the mesolevel. The cultural dimension involves describing actors and the subjective action orientations, attitudes, and norms of actors in professional political communication roles. (p. 345)

The previous chapters of this study have provided an assessment of macro-and meso-level characteristics, and the following chapter will discuss these micro-level factors relating to political media coverage – and political communication culture provides a concept with which to link these levels and theoretically assess phenomena on the micro-level without a detailed discussion of psychological theories that this study cannot accomplish. Pfetsch discusses political communication culture as regulating and defining exchanges between media and political actors, thereby integrating the two subsystems of media and politics. She argues that political communication is characterized by "lasting exchange relationships" (p. 352) between political and media actors as well as tensions between these actors, and that "[t]he constellation and type of tension can be taken as a theoretical criterion for categorizing political communication culture." (ibid.) Based on the two dimensions proximity vs. distance of media and political actors and media logic vs. political logic, four types of political communication culture can be observed (p.353):

(1) Media-oriented political communication culture, characterized by media logic and distance between political and media actors

(2) Public relations-oriented political communication culture, characterized by media logic and proximity between political and media actors

(3) (Party) Political communication culture, characterized by political logic and proximity between media and political actors
(4) Strategic political communication culture, characterized by political logic and distance between political and media actors

These four types of political communication culture can be related to the process of mediatiziation for one, with media-oriented and PR-oriented communication culture respectively pointing towards a higher degree of mediatization than the two types characterized by political logic[71]. Second, they link to the concept of discursive opportunity structures on the other, as they imply "conventions of communication that in their turn profoundly affect the possibilities for political discourse in the society." (Hallin 1994, p. 125) In relation to the structural conditions on the macro-level described in the previous chapters, Pfetsch suggests four constellations of political communication culture types and political communication contexts which fit nicely with Hallin & Mancini`s models as well as with the countries analyzed in this study. Additionally, Pfetsch considers possible consequences for democracy for each of her constellations, which provides input for our comparative

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[71] The question occurs, however, to what extent strategic political communication will actually take place without the influence of media logic. Pfetsch assumes that while the combination of a dominance of media logic and proximity between actors leads to a communication approach primarily aimed at influencing public opinion, a dominance of political logic coupled with distance between media and political actors leads to a communication approach aimed at strategic power preservation. This second approach implies an instrumentalization of the media for "the utilitarian goals of political actors" (p. 362), but to which extent is this possible without adhering to some aspects of media logic? Pfetsch lists dramatization as well as a focus on conflict and on political tactics on the side of the political actors as characteristics of this communication culture, which all satisfy criteria of media logic. We thus suggest that the difference between strategic and PR-oriented political communication culture can rather be seen in the fact that media and political actors agree on the usefulness of media logic, while in the latter, political actors try to employ aspects of media logic strategically for their own advantage and without much active interference from media actors themselves.

assessment of the democratic quality of political media coverage. Her typology includes the following four political communication cultures/contexts:

(1) Countries characterized by a commercialized broadcasting system, a pluralistic and internally autonomous press, weak parties and the fragmentation of interest groups. These countries are likely to possess a media oriented political communication culture; the US provides a perfectly fitting example for this type of political communication culture, which strongly concurs with the Liberal Model. As a potential drawback for democracy, Pfetsch lists the risk of depoliticization, and the same fear often surfaces regarding the political media coverage characteristics which we assume to be caused by a dominance of media logic as well as a great distance between political and media actors, and which we propose to be most dominant in the US.

(2) Countries characterized by a dual broadcasting system committed to the public interest, a press reflecting the party system, and ideologically oriented parties and interest groups. These countries are likely to possess a political communication culture; Germany can be seen as a good example, as this type of political communication culture in great parts parallels the Democratic Corporatist Model. Following Pfetsch, potential drawbacks of this political communication culture for democracy can be expected from two different directions, as she lists them as political instrumentalization as well as a threat of commercialization. However, according to this typology of political communication culture, we can assume that in Germany, political press coverage characteristics caused by political logic will be dominant. The small distance between political and media actors will be most visible in German political media coverage (i.e. little criticism towards the government), and a tendency towards elite democracy (i.e. dominance of elite political actors in coverage) is likely. Increased commercialization can be expected over time.

(3) Countries characterized by a broadcasting system partly committed to the public interest, a politically committed press, weak parties, and low-profile interest groups. These countries are likely to feature political communication processes driven by professionalization and political PR strategies, and harbor the potential democratic drawback of little transparency (although no total depoliticization) as well as dramatization. Pfetsch names Switzerland as an example

for a combination of proximity between political and media actors and media logic, which results in a political communication culture oriented towards public relations. While we agree with Pfetsch`s theoretical typology, we do not concur with the argument of Switzerland as an example for a PR-oriented political communication culture. The reasons for this disagreement lie in the close linkage of political and communication/social culture due to which we propose media logic to be rather slow to gain ground in Switzerland. However in accordance to the further characteristics listed in Pfetsch`s typology we assume that political media coverage characteristics caused by a dominance of media logic as well as proximity between political and media actors (i.e. little criticism towards the government and symbolic consensus) will be visible in Switzerland and dramatization will be present.

(4) Countries characterized by a commercial broadcasting system, a pluralistic press not oriented towards party elites, profit orientation and political autonomy of the media system, as well as strong parties and interest groups who control the political agenda building. They rely on strong media as well as strong political actors, which causes a strong competition for attention and likely causes a strategic political communication culture. Pfetsch names Italy as example, which concurs with the Polarized Pluralist Model. She points towards political instrumentalization, dramatization and the undermination of rational political discourse despite presenting as inherently democratic (i.e. providing what the public wants) as possible detrimental factors for democracy.

Observing these four types of political communication culture more closely, it becomes clear that while generally supporting Hallin & Mancini`s typology, they also accentuate consensus-orientation as a distinctive feature within countries of the Democratic Corporatist Model. With journalistic norms and role conceptions on the other hand, we once again move back from the level of the models towards individual perceptions and their impact on coverage patterns.

Journalistic norms and role conceptions. As mentioned above, Hallin & Mancini (2004) argue that “the adoption of an ideology of journalism as a `public trust` is an important historical development and should not be dismissed as `mere ideology` any more than it should be accepted as pure altruism.” (p. 36) We will first take a look at the journalistic norms

present in the four examined countries. First, different features of public service orientation can be identified in different countries without referring to their normative evaluation. Besides the much stronger role and regulation of public service broadcasting in the European states than in the US, there is also the fact that the American press was commercially oriented early on (Donsbach & Patterson 2004). The media in Germany and Switzerland, in comparison, do not merely constitute private enterprises, but rather fulfil a function as public institutions, especially in Switzerland, where on both regional and national level, a large number of public ballots and referendums which often concern complex political topics need to be presented. It is perceived as the media`s task to explain the issues up for voting to prepare the public for referendums and elections. American democracy, on the other hand, developed earlier than European democracies and is based on liberty rather than equality as its dominant ideal. This is also true for the media: Since the beginnings of the American press as organs of the revolution against the British colonial power, the American notion of the media as fourth branch of government, responsible for keeping government and politics in general in check, has played an important role and American journalists today still fight more aggressively for a free press than their European counterparts (Donsbach & Patterson 2004). This despite the fact that the perceived autonomy among US journalists is 85%, while in Great Britain it bobs at a meager 10% (Weaver & Wu 1998).[72] Professional education among journalists is equally low in Britain (4%), followed by Switzerland with 26% (Marr et al. 2001), and around one third both in the US with 39% and in Germany with 35% (Weaver 1998).

US journalists are more active than their European colleagues. They also have a high division of work, whereas Germany does not show much segregation of journalistic roles at all (Donsbach & Patterson 2004):

> For historical reasons, German and Anglo-Saxon newspaper offices operate quite differently. Whereas British and American newspapers favor centralized newsrooms with a high division of labor, German newspapers tend to decentralize their work by maintaining many more branch offices which produce complete sections of the paper. In addition, employees in German newsrooms have more responsibilities and perform a greater range of journalistic tasks than their Anglo-Saxon counterparts. The reason is that in Germany a `holistic` understanding of journalism prevails; editorial work is regarded as an `integrated whole` not to be broken up. (Esser 1998, p. 375)

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[72] Data for Germany and Switzerland was not available.

This is especially important as Wilhoit & Weaver (1986) in their study of American journalists conclude that the organizational context of journalists is an important predictor for journalistic role orientation. US and British newsrooms distinguish between the "news gatherers" and "news processors", the former being responsible for the gathering of breaking news and background information, the latter occupied with checking, editing and presenting the material to the audience (Esser 1998). In Germany, both news gathering or writing and editing is performed by the same person[73], which continues the tradition of a more commentary-oriented role conception in Germany despite the so-called "re-education" of German journalists after WWII, training them in objective reporting. In the words of Donsbach & Patterson (2004),

> [j]ournalists in Western democratic societies operate under similar legal, political, economic, and cultural conditions. They enjoy formidable legal protections, have considerable access to those in power, and are backed by substantial news organizations. They also share a professional orientation that affects how they see their work. (p. 251)

However, in contrast to most American journalists, their European counterparts probably would not completely agree with the following definition of professional skill, taken from one of the most used textbooks in media studies and communication in the US: "The height of professional skill is the exercise of a practical craft, which delivers the required institutional product, characterized by a high degree of objectivity, key marks of which are obsessive facticity and neutrality of attitude." (McQuail 2000, p.257). Due to Hallin & Mancini`s (2004) conceptual framework that this study refers to, the Liberal Model with its emphasis on objectivity and neutrality as pillars of professionalism implicitly constitutes somewhat of a norm which all countries are compared to. At a first glance, this also implies a lower degree of journalistic professionalism at least in those countries which show high political parallelism or a tradition of interpretive or advocative journalism. Hallin & Mancini, however, purposely separated these two dimensions in their theoretical model, quoting a European journalist`s description of his work in their explanation:

> The expression of a distinct point of view […][is] not contrary to but in fact intimately connected with the notion of journalistic independence and journalism as public trust:

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[73] Likewise, there is no separate labeling for journalistic roles in Germany. While in the UK and US, journalists can be editors or reporters, German journalists are generally called "Redakteur" ("Redaktor" in Swiss German), with the one possible exception of "Chefredakteur", which refers to the journalist in charge of the respective production or issue.

> This is what it means to be an `honest witness`, to tell the `story of the present` as the journalist perceives it; this is how journalism serves the public; and this is why journalistic autonomy matters – to preserve not neutrality, but the integrity of this process of `social judgment`. (p. 41)

A short overview over the history and application of the concept of objectivity in journalism shows indeed many pitfalls for research handling this multifaceted and multi-applied notion: Introducing their study analyzing the understanding of "objectivity" by journalist in four different countries Donsbach and Klett (1993) state that "[m]ost likely the notion of objective journalism was created in the United States" (p. 54). They also say that "[t]here is probably no other term which has stimulated as much discussion and controversy inside and outside the profession of journalism" (p. 53). And most literature, including the most elementary textbooks in media studies, agrees with them (e.g. Noelle-Neumann et al. 2000, McQuail 2000). The *Dictionary of Journalism and Mass Communication* aptly summarizes the problem stating, "when discussing the question how objective news are or can be, argumentation takes place on different levels" (Noelle-Neumann et al. 2000, p. 333). To nonetheless provide an analysis and discussion of objectivity in journalism, it is of utmost necessity to first define the understanding of objectivity which forms the basis of the present study.

Objectivity is first and foremost an ethical principle, demanding truthfulness and conscious neutrality and the willingness to subscribe to both of these concepts. In legal contexts, objectivity can be proven by veritable testimony. In science, objectivity can be proven by declaring coefficients for validity, reliability and showing reproducibility, thus allowing for intersubjective verifiability. In journalism, too, truth is central. But objectivity is not so easy: There is a large volume of relevant information from which to select news to publish, there is no guaranty that sources actually supply any information, there is direct competition with not only other newspapers but also other media, there is a commercial need to attract an audience, and the process of selecting and publishing news is a public one which at all times can be contended from different sides (McQuail 2000, p. 185). Therefore, as Tuchman puts it, "[f]acts must be quickly identified" (1978, p. 82). Objectivity thus became translated into professional journalistic techniques, guiding reporters what to write, and how to write it, emphasizing sources and detachment, among others. Objectivity became "a very practical guide and instrument in the collection, presentation and even (for the audience) the reception

of information" (McQuail 1992, p. 183). While more details will be presented later on about the characteristics of objectivity as a journalistic method, one more important point needs to be made: To be committed to the ethical principle of objectivity and the wish to convey the truth to an audience does not necessarily entail the employment of those professional strategies implying objectivity.

> Logically, there is as much validity in equating interpretation with objectivity as in considering the pairing of contradictory assertions to be objective. In either case, the reporting may be objective or not, depending upon the reporter. In the latter case, however, the effort is more visible" (Roshco 1976, p. 55).

Analogically, while probably very few to no journalists would state their goal as publishing lies and falsehoods instead of truth, not all would agree with the understanding of truth that is implied in objectivity as journalistic method. Definitions of objectivity as manifested in journalistic work vary widely across time, nations and cultures, as we will see later on. In his book Media Performance (1992), McQuail dedicates a whole chapter to the concept of objectivity in news, listing five sources for the current objectivity standard in US journalism: Professionalization, development of technology (especially television), protection of reporters (especially in wartimes), news as a product and commercialization, and audience expectations. A look at the historical development of American journalism reveals which processes and events led to this news reporting standard grounded in objectivity which is possibly most prevalent today. As St. John (2009) puts it, "[t]he press`s struggle in America to affirm its ability to accurately portray reality has its roots in journalism`s drive to heighten its legitimacy after World War I." (p. 353) And indeed, the first war in which mass-mediated propaganda played a major role was WWI – newspapers, radio broadcasting and films were all available to spread messages among the people, and to make the best use of this, the US government in 1917 created the Committee on Public Information (CPI), which had the mission to gather and strengthen public support for American`s position and goals in the war. Following this experience, news workers began to concentrate on establishing guidelines how to report on "the truth", and how to remove themselves from the grasp of professional propaganda. One of the most prominent advocates of this new approach to news reporting was Walter Lippmann, former advisor of President Woodrow Wilson and himself participant in the CPI; in his still famous *Public Opinion* (1922), Lippmann demanded journalistic reliance on scientific values like observation, evidence and facts. News reporting began to emphasize detachment and balance as well as dependency on official sources for fact-based

news (St. John 2009, p. 355). Neutral record-taking grew in importance as defining characteristic of the newly developing profession of journalism during the 1920s and 30s. This trend facilitated reporting and implied legitimization – it freed journalists from the responsibility for content as well as from making the distinction between truth and lie since accountability for both now lay on the side of their (legitimized) sources. Additionally, the provision of basic guidelines for story selection, the routine procedure of handling opposing arguments and the reliance on official, easy-to-reach sources sped up the publishing process and shielded reporters from accusations of bias.

In its canons from April 1923, the American Society of Newspaper Editors describes impartiality as one of the most important tenets of journalistic work: “Sound practice makes clear the distinction between news reports and expressions of opinion. News reports should be free from opinion or bias of any kind”. It also laid the foundation for the principle of visual separation of facts and opinion, as the following addition to the entry states that “[t]his rule does not apply to so-called special articles unmistakably devoted to advocacy or characterized by a signature authorizing the writer`s own conclusions and interpretations”. The professionalization of journalism was well on its way, with specialized techniques meant to protect, among other things, the autonomy of journalists and the provision of public service, rapidly taking hold among the news makers community. Furthermore, at the urging of Joseph Pulitzer, one of the most established and distinguished journalists and publishers of his time, the first School of Journalism was founded at the University of Columbia, New York in 1912. Since 1917, the school awards the Pulitzer Prize, honoring outstanding journalistic work and mainly known for its winners in the category of investigative reporting. But while Pulitzer was the first to suggest education and training for journalists to increase their status, Roshco (1976) argues that although the Pulitzer award came to be one of the most recognized, well-known and coveted acknowledgements of outstanding journalism in the sense of investigative, proactive and critical journalistic work, the development of mainstream journalism went the opposite way: “It remained standard practice to demonstrate objectivity by sticking to surface factuality. Subsurface reporting was largely left to a privileged few” (p. 44).

During WWII, the role as objective agent versus German military propaganda additionally became attractive, but during the 1950s, another event altered the routines of news making – the introduction of television. This advent brought with it two important changes: First, television news reporting was faster, more current and, thanks to its reliance on images, more engaging than the traditional newspaper reporting. Second, television produced increased competition on the news market and introduced a stronger commercial alignment as it relied mainly on advertising revenue. The press` reactions to this were twofold. On the one hand, it utilized its experience in and suitability for analysis and commentary: "Now that television regularly scooped newspapers in reporting the `hard` - that is, most visible – news of the day, the printed media increasingly began to report undercurrents not visible to television`s cameras" (St. John 2009, p. 48). This expansion of the editorial comment, however, was often integrated into the established reliance on official sources and authorities by employing outside experts to provide analysis. On the other hand, newspapers began widening their angles, attempting to present a broad range of perspectives for each topic as to reach a larger audience by not disgruntling any group of their potential readers. In the 1960, with the Vietnam War and the Watergate affair, press journalism again took a turn towards the investigative. Roshco (1976) argues that "[a] reporter`s role- performance changes as the value accorded his appearance of impartiality declines and the value accorded his interpretation of events rises" (p. 57), and with Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein from the Washington Post, the value ascribed to watchdog-journalism started rising again. A study by Zhu (1990) shows a stronger tendency towards investigative and advocacy role conceptions in journalism during that time, and some scientists and practitioners even spoke of a "New Journalism" or "Europeanization" of US journalism (Donsbach & Klett, 1993). Still, sociologist and keen observer of American civic history Michael Schudson in 1998 states that "[t]here is no new ideal in journalism to successfully challenge objectivity" (p. 193).

More recent research examined current role conceptions and changes in professionalism in US journalists, and shows an increase in overall support for analysis and advocacy over the last 5 years, backed by a tendency towards advocacy and proactive behavior among those journalists who also maintain a blog. At the same time, however, the authors find that professional discretion is growing less important especially for journalists under stress (e.g. during economic crisis) and that caution towards ethically controversial reporting practices is

increasing (Beam et al. 2009). This points towards a rising taste for advocacy journalism as well as a more cautious, obedient stance towards authority. Beam et al. concisely summarize not just their results but the situation of (American) journalism in general when they say that "the findings of this study […] can be interpreted both positively and negatively, depending on one`s view of the most appropriate roles for journalists" (p.43). This said, there has been criticism of the facts-based, objectivity-focused approach from its very beginning, reaching from the argument that "there is no substitute for the vitality and the depth of close and direct intercourse and attachment" (Dewey 1927 via St. John 2009, p. 364) to the assumption that the principle of balanced coverage helps perpetuate existing societal power structures (Bennett 1988). Roshco (1976) suggests that a source`s status plays a more important role for the selection of news than the "validity of the statement`s content" (p. 50) – this argument is also made by Burton St. John (2009) in his assessment of the development of journalistic professionalism after WWII:

> Professional journalism developed an unforeseen synergy with propaganda – objectivity`s call for facts contextualized by experts had the unintended effect of promoting news worker reliance on propagandists. […] [T]he press`s objectivity stance contributes to an enduring, if unintended, preference for PR sources and propaganda materials. (p. 365).

It was thus especially the routinization of objectivity as a technique that has drawn criticism, with adversaries arguing that it is inconsistent not only with advocacy and interpretation but also, and more importantly, with independence and diversity. "[T]he conventions of objectivity are manipulated and sometimes misused for ulterior purposes, by advertisers, propagandists and all who have an interest in the `management` of truth, which includes nearly everyone" says McQuail (1992, p. 195). What McQuail is referring to here is what Terry McDermott, former LA Times reporter, in a CJR-article circumscribes as, "[t]he common newspaper style is so heavily codified you need a Berlitz course to interpret it" (2010, p. 39) and what, much earlier and in more scientific terms, Gaye Tuchman calls "objectivity as professional method" (1978). Since objectivity as a moral conviction might be widely acknowledged by journalists around the world but is not necessarily easily or automatically visible in journalistic output, professional techniques supposed to convey objectivity have developed. In *Making News* (1978), Tuchman lists them as presentation of antagonistic standpoints, employment of experts, use of quotes, hard-facts-first-structure and formal separation of facts and opinion - we also adopt these five main aspects of her "web of facticity" for the present empirical analysis in the assessment of the objectivity in an article,

measuring the length of quotes present in any article (different than Wilke & Reinemann 2001, we counted words instead of lines to account for very short quotes, too) and recording for any given source if it was an expert or not, and used Tuchman`s indicators as dummy variables to form an index of objectivity. Through the employment of these strategies, newspaper writers signal the truthfulness of their facts and the neutrality of their own reporting, acknowledging their responsibilities as (together with other media) sole purveyors of the news to the public. States McDermott (2010), "I never worked in a newsroom where theses responsibilities were seriously questioned. I also never worked in one where they were seriously honored. I don`t mean that people didn`t think they were being honored. And they were, but only in the most formulaic way imaginable" (p. 39). And of course, formulaic techniques for signaling objective reporting entail several consequences: First of all, the more legitimate a source is, the more likely it is that its statements or information are presented as facts in the news media. The determination of legitimacy of a source is dependent on the offices he or she holds – the closer a source is to the President, the more relevance its statements receive. Sources which do not hold any public office can attain quasi-legitimacy, as Tuchman (1978) calls it, by accruing a large number of followers. The more members a movement has, the more legitimacy is accredited to its speaker. This of course plays back to Roshco`s (1976), Bennett`s (1988) and other`s argument that complete conformation to the professional principal of objectivity leads to a perpetuation of the status quo, preferential treatment for official (i.e. governmental) sources and disregard for already marginalized groups in society. These assumptions are also consequential to the service news media are supposed to render to democracy, as Habermas (1994) examines when discussing the role of the media in a discourse model of democracy (see chapter 4). Likewise, the crucial role which is ascribed to quotes and experts in objective reporting has certain drawbacks, as the readers are usually not privy to the journalistic process of gathering sources and obtaining quotable statements. Thus "reporters may remove their own opinions from the story by getting others to say what they themselves think" (Tuchman 1978, p. 95), establishing a distance between themselves and the opinions presented in the story and thereby removing themselves from the responsibility for any non-objective statements or contested viewpoints. The routine of formally separating facts from opinion can function similarly. Once an article is labeled "commentary", "opinion", etc., this can signal that "the materials enclosed may be problematic.[…] Labeling some items as other than `objective facts` also reinforces the claim

that most stories present facts" (Tuchman 1978, p. 98). Finally, by providing different versions of legitimate reality (e.g. by citing two political opponents or officeholders), journalists themselves are not merely providing balanced information, but are also formulating and, in a way, controlling controversies concerning news issues (Tuchman 1978) which, again, usually omit standpoints held by non-official, marginalized civic groups.

Our assessment of objectivity is, as mentioned, based on Tuchman`s concept of objectivity as a journalistic strategy, which she developed in "Making News" in 1978. We adopt the five main aspects of her "web of facticity" in our variables assessing the objectivity in an article, additionally measuring the length of quotes and number of expert sources. Furthermore, to look at the concept of objectivity from the opposite side and to investigate more closely the assumption that objectivity might prevent marginalized standpoints to enter the debate, we adopt an examination based on work by Gamson (1999) and Macdonald (2000), who examine the language of the lifeworld and the role of ordinary individuals in current political coverage: By including narratives as indicator for a diversity of news reporting styles, we assess counter-currents to the traditional US-American implementation of objective reporting, which nonetheless equally emphasize the inclusion of various voices and viewpoints. One more, specific situation related to objectivity which has come under criticism often and especially of late, is media behavior in times of war: Journalistic standards are based mainly on professional ethic, a fact which can cause any investigative journalistic mentality to wane in times of crises, when the media tend to "rally around the flag", uncritically supporting government decisions and often exercising pre-emptive self-censorship. One of the most current and prominent examples of this behavior could be observed in the time prior to and during the Iraq war, when the US government in 2001 claimed the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq to justify the war. The *New York Times* published several articles supporting this assertion during the next three years, as did other newspapers and broadcast stations. However, especially one *New York Times* article describing the discovery of aluminum tubes used for the construction of nuclear weapons (*New York Times*, Sept. 8, 2002) was subsequently used by the US government to justify war efforts (e.g. Dick Cheney in *Meet the Press*, NBC, Sept. 9, 2002) . It later became clear that the kind of tubes found was harmless, and the responsible journalist had been reporting from Iraq embedded into the military unit searching for weapons of mass destruction. This event eventually led the *New*

York Times editors to publish an apology in May 2004, in which they stated, "[W]e have found a number of instances of coverage that was not as rigorous as it should have been. In some cases, information that was controversial then, and seems questionable now, was insufficiently qualified or allowed to stand unchallenged. Looking back, we wish we had been more aggressive in re-examining the claims as new evidence emerged — or failed to emerge." (*New York Times*, May 26, 2004). Their remarks finish with a promise that clearly indicates the reversion to traditional investigative values: "We consider the story of Iraq's weapons, and of the pattern of misinformation, to be unfinished business. And we fully intend to continue aggressive reporting aimed at setting the record straight." (*New York Times*, Sept. 8, 2002). This example also shows how investigative notions are certainly deeply rooted in the self-conception of American journalists, and how they do at times challenge the role of pure informant.

Most of the above criticism, like most of the above presented research, relates to journalism in the United States, where the standard of objectivity likely has its origin and where it has been fueled by early professionalization and a media system which from its beginnings was based on commercial revenue. Additionally, in most continental Western Europe, the liberal consensus was not as strong as in the United States, and perspectives on the description of reality tended towards an emphasis on individual Weltanschauung. Accordingly, Donsbach and Klett (1993) find that for example German journalists view their role as more politically active and make news decisions based on subjective belief. And while the majority of journalists in all countries thinks "objectivity" is very important (91% in the US vs. 81% in Germany and 83% in the UK), American and British journalists agree to the statement that "good news reporting expresses fairly the position of each side in a political dispute", whereas their German counterparts prefer the declaration that "good news reporting goes beyond the statements of the contending sides to the hard facts of a political dispute" (p. 66). The importance of "objectivity" is highest for those who adhere to the fair representation model, and lowest for those who support the "truth behind statements"-model: "The more retained a journalist`s understanding of objectivity – i.e., avoiding subjective beliefs to enter news decisions and fairly representing all sides in a conflict – the more important this professional norm is for him or her." (Donsbach & Klett 1993, p. 75) Thus, regarding the creation of discursive opportunities, we can conclude that indicators of this retained understanding of

objectivity will be higher in the US than in the other three countries as the notion of professionalism in North America is much more closely linked to the concept of objectivity and neutrality and thus provides resonance and legitimacy for this type of reporting.

Aside from the general norms of their metier, journalists will also adhere to a certain role conception in their profession, an understanding of their task cumulating expectations, requirements and limitations of macro- and meso-level factors of their surroundings and closely linked to the above described norms. Thus, concluding, we provide an overview over the dominant role conceptions of journalists in Germany, Switzerland, the UK and North America; however, as Blum (2005) states, "the state of research concerning political journalism in Switzerland is not good" (p. 116), especially since for the purpose of this paper data roughly comparable with the data existing for the other three countries is needed.[74] Therefore, much of the following description will focus on Germany, the US and Britain, whereas results from this study`s content analysis will hopefully provide more, if indirect, information about the role conceptions of Swiss journalists.

Donsbach & Patterson (2004) suggest a two-dimensional approach to the analysis and description of journalistic roles. One dimension is based on journalists autonomy as political actors and measures activity, the second dimension examines a journalist`s positioning as a political actor and measures the level of neutrality. The goal to influence politics points towards an active journalistic actor (like in Britain and the US), aiming at advocating values and ideas indicates a non-neutral, advocate journalist (like in Germany). The dimensions are independent and form four role conceptions: passive-neutral, passive-advocate, active-neutral and active-advocate. Based on medium scores of different national media on all dimensions, the authors conclude that British print journalism can be described as advocate and passive, US media (print as well as broadcast) is active and neutral, and German media (again print as well as broadcast) is advocate and active. As Donsbach & Patterson explain, "[j]ournalists in these countries work through different mediums, but they have a shared conception of news. In other words they have a common journalistic culture." (p. 267) To distinguish the various role conceptions, previous research analyzing interpretive journalism regarding its negativity

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[74] For general information about journalists in Switzerland see for example Marr et al. 2001, Blum 2005, Wyss & Keel 2010.

(Kepplinger 1998, Zaller 1999) provides a useful empirical assessment of journalistic advocacy and activity by analyzing the article trigger and the source of article tone respectively we adopted these indicators for the present study.

If one wanted to include Switzerland in the above list, it would assumedly score higher on neutrality than on advocacy, if the results of a journalist survey by Marr et al. (2001) are any indicator: He finds that the most common role conceptions of Swiss journalists are analyst and neutral mediator. A more recent study by Wyss & Keel (2010) confirms these results, reporting similarly high results for the roles of advisor and critic. A more detailed comparison of the three countries provides even more specific characteristics:[75] The one aspect which a large number of journalists from all three countries agreed upon was the goal to get information to the public quickly. Aside from this, however, no universal occupational roles could be ascertained. The watchdog-role (i.e. investigating government claims) was important for British journalists (88%) but not for their German colleagues (33%), the Brits moreover rated the analysis of complex problems as very important (83%). US and German journalists also rated giving ordinary people a voice as less important (48% and 40% respectively) than their British counterparts (56%). To summarize in the words of Weaver & Wu (1998),

> [T]here are still many differences among journalists. […] Many of them seem to reflect societal influences, especially political system differences, more than the influences of media organizations, journalism education, and professional norms. The patterns of similarities and differences are not neatly classifiable along some of the more common political or cultural dimensions, however, lending some support to the conclusion […] that journalism education and professional socialization are not necessarily a function of politics or dominant ideology." (p. 90f.)

But starting with the role models we can assume for journalists in different contexts, on the other hand, we can deduce a specific structure of discursive opportunities created by various journalistic role understandings - and this in turn can be assumed to influence the character of political media coverage. More specifically:

(1) Due to the history of German and Swiss journalists as commentators and due to the fusion of writing and editing in German and Swiss newsrooms, we expect higher legitimacy for coverage including interpretation and opinion in German and Swiss coverage than in British and US coverage.

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[75] All results are from a comparative journalist survey in 21 countries between 1988 and 1996 by Weaver (1998).

Furthermore, regarding consequences from the influence of political communication culture and journalistic norms for political press content, we can summarize as follows:

(2) Political media coverage characteristics caused by a dominance of media logic as well as a great distance between political and media actors (i.e. criticism towards the government, etc.) will be most frequent in the US.
(3) Political media coverage characteristics caused by a dominance of media logic will be least frequent in Germany; characteristics caused by political logic will be dominant. The small distance between political and media actors will be most visible in German political media coverage (i.e. little criticism towards the government), and a tendency towards elite democracy (i.e. dominance of elite political actors in coverage) is likely. Increased commercialization can be expected over time.
(4) Proximity between political and media actors (i.e. little criticism towards the government and symbolic consensus) will be visible in Switzerland.
(5) Indicators of objectivity will be higher in the US than in the other three countries as the notion of professionalism in North America is much more closely linked to the concept of objectivity and neutrality and thus creates discursive opportunity structures (i.e. resonance and legitimacy) for this type of reporting.
(6) Due to the history of German and Swiss journalists as commentators and due to the fusion of writing and editing in German and Swiss newsrooms, the legitimacy for coverage including interpretation and opinion will be higher than in Great Britain and the US.

Overview: Mediatization in Context

With these detailed explications regarding the characteristics of the four Western democracies examined in this study in mind, we can now look at the impact of the process of mediatization in a more minute fashion. More specifically, we can deduct certain implications which the mutual influence between contextual political system factors and the characteristics of increasing mediatization produce with regard to patterns of political press coverage in all four countries. This illustrates the fact which we have already emphasized ealier, that mediatization is far from being an influence that causes a globally uniform block of coverage patterns, and rather has to be examined in relationship with existing contextual characteristics of political media coverage. In other words, having established a system of contextual factors with which to differentiate between the four examined countries with view on resulting

patterns of political media coverage, and having defined relevant contextual factors in each separate country which we additionally expect to shape these patterns, we can now deduct several assumptions. These assumptions concern the interplay between the defining power of these contextual factors on the macro-, meso- and micro-level of each model or individual country on the one hand, and the impact of processes of mediatization and transnational convergence on the other hand. Or, to say it differently, the following assumptions are based on expectations regarding the soil which the different national or regional contexts offer to the advance of mediatization and transnational convergence, on the benefits and drawbacks they might present to the progress of mediatization and convergence:

(1) Mediatization as well as commercialization and professionalization are increasing in all four countries but stronger in the countries of the Liberal than the ones of the Democratic Corporatist Model, where political logic is still relatively strong.
(1a) Switzerland`s particular political logic of consensus, slow decision-making, group involvement, and direct democracy directly opposes conflict focus, fast news, personalization, negativism/criticism towards authorities and simplification.
(1b) In Germany, political factors like coalition building, the relevance of political parties, and the close distance between media and politics limit features of media and commercial logic like conflict focus, personalization, negativism/criticism towards authorities and simplification.
(1c) In Great Britain, the increasing political power of the Prime Minister, the great distance between media and politics, the strong role of the political opposition, the tradition of governmental secrecy and the de facto two-party system promote facets of media and commercial logic like personalization, criticism/negativism towards authorities, focus on conflict and strategy, sensationalism, simplification and polarization. The strong role of parties however might limit some of these characteristics.
(1d) In the US, the de facto two party system, the system of presidential democracy, and the distant relationship between media and politics similarly facilitate some aspects of media and commercial logic, specifically simplification, polarization and focus on conflict, personalization, emphasis on strategy and criticism/negativism towards authorities.
(2) Analytic instead of event-centered reporting is becoming more common in all four countries.

Democratic Standards of Media Quality

Now there is one more aspect to the comparative examination of patterns of political press coverage that merits attention - the normative consequences of the above described factors of influence for political media coverage. The question regarding the quality of political media coverage has been driving comparative political communication research in the same proportion as processes like mediatization and transnational convergence have moved into focus - what does a change in media coverage patterns mean for the quality of this coverage, and especially so with concern to political media coverage? Can the effects of increased mediatization and transnational convergence be seen as detrimental for democracy? We will try to answer this question by examining more closely various concepts of democracy and their consequences for the role of and expectations toward political media coverage, which will give us a better understanding of the cause of the complexity and sometimes ostensibly inconsistent interpretation of what quality in political press coverage can mean in different national and longitudinal contexts.

Often, democracy is referred to on a general level as the basis for a normative evaluation of the media. Most often, monitoring the governing and informing the governed are deducted as the core political functions of mass media in a democracy. However, to conduct a more detailed and thorough analysis of the democratic performance of mass media, more than these basic functions need to be taken into account. Different normative democratic paradigms that can stand behind expectations towards the media need to be considered, their consequences for the public sphere and the role of the media analyzed, and their merit for empirical media research shown.This thesis proposes to employ democratic theory to assess the quality of political media content and suggests empirical operationalizations for comparative content analysis of political affairs coverage based on different democratic paradigms.
Democracy is a way of defining the relationship between citizens and the state. Different paradigms of democracy coexist. Different theories of democracy define different responsibilities on the side of the citizens and the state, and they entail different understandings of the role of the public sphere in processes of political decision making. Therefore, different theories of democracy suggest different expectations towards the role of public communication in political decision making. And this also implies different expectations towards the media, depending on the democratic paradigm followed.

In general, two dimensions of democracy need to be distinguished for our purposes:
(1) Democracy as a form of government: Governance is based on the sovereignty of the people and extensive rights of participation are guaranteed for every citizens.
(2) Democracy as a theoretical concept: Theoretical concepts of democracy differ in their view on the purpose of democratic processes as well as the roles of the government, society (or individuals) and the public sphere.
The first dimension can serve to identify countries as de-facto democracies (see for example Freedom House). The second dimension, which is the one which is relevant in this context, can for the purposes of this paper be summarized into three main paradigms which represent differing normative views on the actors, realms and processes of democracy[76]:
(a) Elitist paradigm
(b) Participatory paradigm
(c) Discourse paradigm
Under each of these paradigms, we subsume democratic theories with similar understandings of the public sphere. Following Ferree et al. (2002), we use these paradigms as "organizing tool" (p. 1) to group different concepts of the public sphere and its role for democracy.
The definition of "public sphere" is therefore dependent on the respective democratic theories; the one aspect which we assume for all definitions is that "in a large public body, […] communication requires specific means for transmitting information and influencing those who receive it. Today, newspapers and magazines, radio and television are the media of the public sphere." (Habermas, 2001, p. 102)

The media functions as transmitter and mediator between the governed and the governing in the realm of the public sphere; in this role, it can fulfill different tasks: Monitoring the governing, informing the governed as well as the governing about the respective other group`s purposes and goals, interpreting actions of the governing for the governed, mobilizing the

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[76] Critical theories of democracy are missing from this list exactly due to their critical character. This paper aims at the practical application of the theoretical paradigms to the analysis of media content, and critical theories are by their nature at least to a certain extent utopian. Indicators of critical paradigms of democracy cannot be expected to manifest in actual, current media content, otherwise the posed criticism would be obsolete. To a certain extent, this is probably also true for Habermas` dicsourse democracy.

governed when their interests are at stake, and including marginalized groups or individuals into the public sphere and therefore into public communication. The link between the character of the public sphere and the role of and expectations towards the media is as of yet largely a theoretical one, but we propose that certain expectations towards the media are mirrored in media content and that various aspects of different paradigms of democracy are realized in political media coverage. Instrumentalizing various different understandings of democracy facilitates more detailed assessment of the democratic quality of political news coverage in different contexts. Instead of a simple dichotomy of "good" vs. "bad" coverage for democracy, it makes various facets of democracy visible and acknowledges different definitions or understandings of what is "good" for democracy. We do not define the various concepts of democracy on a normative level but rather expect a mix of different aspects to be visible in different countries. This means that press coverage does not have to adhere to one specific model of democracy to support democratic notions but can combine various aspects. We developed several democratic indicators (i.e. variables) from the theoretical frame of each paradigm to assess the occurrence of aspects corresponding to various democratic paradigms in political press coverage. Following, the traditional democratic paradigms will be described in more detail and content indicators will be derived for each.

Elitist or Representative Paradigm

The elitist paradigm of democracy, also known as realist school of democracy, assumes that a country can and should only be governed by a knowledgeable political elite. The probably most prominent modern advocate of this democratic paradigm in its purest form was Max Weber, who called this type of democracy a leader democracy (Weber, 1922). In this view, democracy is a means to select and, to a certain extent, control the ruling elite. The main instrument in the democratic process are elections, in which the citizens can chose their leaders and in which they can vote out those members of the governing elite who are corrupt or otherwise not fit for their role. Democracy draws its legitimation from the character and charisma of the individuals ruling the country, meaning its legitimation is based on the trust of the populace in the individual people governing them. Electing leaders is therefore mainly a matter of personal preferences regarding the candidates, and elections are a matter of campaigning for a personal following. The political expertise of the citizens is not of importance in this model of democracy, rather it is assumed that the average citizen is neither

interested in nor capable of understanding the intricate processes of politics - "[e]lite democracy assumes that meaningful understanding of social forces and structural problems is beyond the populaces capacity and, in any event, is marginal to its interests"(Baker, 2002, p. 133). The only political information relevant to the populace is information regarding the good conduct of the ruling elite – it needs to be able to control its leaders regarding corruption, delinquency and incompetence. Therefore, the media have one important task: They must inform the people in cases of corruption or incompetence among the governing, as to enable the citizens to execute their right to control its leaders via elections. This arrangement ensures that corrupt rulers are exchanged with honest ones and that the governing elite is kept in check by periodic elections. The combination of the importance of character and honesty in the governing elite has certain implications for what is and what is not relevant for the people regardings politics: "[B]ecause honesty and competence of elites rather than public participation in determining the structure of society are the central democratic concern, heavy emphasis on the character and behavior of individual public figures […]. A deeper focus on structural and other substantive issues is basically unimportant – matters best left to elites." (Baker, 2002, p. 134)

Another variation of the elitist paradigm of democracy can be found in theories of democracy which are influenced by economical ideas. These theories also view democracy as a method to legitimize governance however they are based on the image of democracy as a marketplace for profit maximizers, on the side of the political elite as well as on the side of the citizens. Among advocates of this theory are Anthony Downs, Edward Burke and Joseph Schumpeter, whose perspective, Norris (2000, p. 23) says, "reflects one of the most widely accepted understandings of democratic institutions". This is true insofar as Schumpeter (1942) lists competition for governmental positions, opinion formation through the political process and freedom of speech (or, more specifically, discussion) as the main pillars of a functioning democracy. Democracy is characterized by the fact that "individuals can gain decision-making power in a competition over the votes of the people" (Schulz, 2008, p. 201), and to ensure an effective competition, the people need to have certain liberties concerning speech, publishing and assembly so that a public opinion can develop. But, and this is where Norris is wrong, the process of democratic public opinion formation in the opinion of Schumpeter and other advocates of elite-oriented democratic paradigms does not have much to do with the

idea of a public sphere as pluralistic civic forum as developed by Habermas. The will of the people is for Schumpeter defined as the will of the majority and it is based on the citizens` a priori interests of the citizens which are rooted in socialization and class. Democratic processes of public discussion have the sole function of bundling those prepolitical interests into alternatives that are supported by the majority. This ensures that the elected political elite can make decisions of a socially binding nature. Citizen participation therefore should consists of periodic elections only and is not desirable outside of the electoral process since, as Schumpeter puts it, ”the typical citizen drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field. He argues and analyzes in a way which he would readily recognize as infantile within the sphere of his real interests. He becomes a primitive again” (Schumpeter quoted after McCraw 2007, p. 262). Any further citizen involvement presents a potential danger, not an asset, to democratic (elite) governance. Anthony Downs (1957) emphasizes this aspect by adding the notion of the rationally ignorant voter. He refers to social matters as solely byproducts of private ambitions. Only those citizens whose profits from voting will be larger than their costs (e.g. the inconveniences of getting to the voting booth) are going to vote. As a consequence, most voters chose most of the time to ignore information pertaining to political issues which do not promise personal gratification. This assumption presents another argument against efforts to include the populace into political processes outside from elections or to create broader political participation in the public sphere. Additionally, Downs assumes not only a skeptical outlook on the voters but also on the political candidates, whose goal he says is not to serve society and further social matters but rather to receive the rewards of holding office. The dangers implicit in both Schumpeter`s and Downs` theories are a reduction of politics to campaigning for votes as well as a focus on issues which can be implemented quickly instead of an emphasis on long-term political projects.

Ferree et al. (2002) summarize another version of elite or representative democracy which is even more relevant to currently existing Western democracies. A version whose supporters “want a [...] well-functioning public sphere, but see ist roles as strengthening a system of formal representation through political parties that secures the real basis of democracy.” (p. 290) In this view, strongly elitist notions are replaced by the more moderate idea of citizen representation via elected experts. As mentioned above, the role of the public sphere in this

understanding of democracy is rather limited. Let us take the Habermasian definition of the public sphere as a starting point, since it is arguably the most widely applied and acknowledged. Habermas (2001) says,

> By the public sphere we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. Then they behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy. Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion – that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions – about matters of general interest. (p. 102)

Theorists proposing elite democracy would not fully disagree with this definition of the public sphere. They, too, assume freedom of speech and assembly as well as a free press as a basic precondition for democracy. After all, only a free press is able to find out about and expose corruption or incompetence in government. However, there are two critical issues regarding the realization of this definition within an elite democracy: First, the issue of access. As Ferree et al. (2002) explicate, inclusion into the public sphere in an elite governed democracy

> should depend on having a legitimate representative to articulate one`s preferred frame in a public forum. […] Media standing and the amount of coverage of the frames of different actors should be more or less proportional to their share of the electoral vote for parties, or to membership size for relevant civil society actors. (p. 291)

The public sphere therefore is by no means inclusive, and it does not aim to be, either. It is assumed that politically competent and interested citizens will engage themselves in the political arena and thereby become part of the elite; all other citizens or citizen groups can rely on their representation through political experts, whose number and power depends on the size of the represented group. This system automatically leads to a de facto exclusion of marginalized groups and individuals from the public sphere.

The second crucial issue concerns the term “public opinion“: First of all, public opinion is important to the governing elite regarding elections as it denotes “[t]he collective views of a significant part of any public“ (McQuail 2000, p. 502) and therefore determines the election outcome. This view of public opinion as the opinion of the majority, easily captured by polling, is certainly different from Habermas` understanding of public opinion, as we will see later. Second, in an elite democracy, public opinion beyond elections would certainly be based on an elitist concept of public opinion, which regards public opinion as “the opinion of the

judicious and responsible“ (Noelle-Neumann et al. 2000, p. 371) in which it depends “on the individual if he/she wants to participate or keep out.“ (Noelle-Neumann et al. 2000, p. 371) According to the rather skeptical view of the citizens implicit in the elitist paradigm of democracy, only a small group of people will have the interest and capacity to become politically involved, and the chances are good that they will belong to the farther circles of the governing elite. This limited conception of public opinion certainly differs from the more inclusive conceptions in pluralist or discourse theories of democracy, as will be explicated in the following subchapters. It also entails specific expectations towards the media, which we have already established as means of communication within the public sphere:

(1) Expose corruption and incompetence among the governing elite

(2) Encourage citizens to vote and provide information about electoral alternatives

(3) Emphasize character and behavior of politicians

(4) Support of the legitimacy of the constitutional order

(5) Establish public discussion only if the governing elite is divided on an issue

The media`s first and foremost task is to monitor the governing elite. Only a free press, independent from governmental influences, can accomplish this. As long as the government behaves as it should and no corruption or incompetence occurs among the political actors, it is sufficient if political affairs coverage provides the most basic information about the decisions being made by the governing elite. According to strongly elitist views, political coverage can also be expected to center on the character and behavior of politicians rather than on issues of political substance or content, since government for a large part is based on charismatic leadership. Honesty and competence are the traits most asked for in any political actor and the personality of the leaders is of increased importance. This is especially true in election campaigns, which are the main pillar of democracy according to the elitist paradigm. And therefore, it is the media`s responsibility to encourage all citizens to participate in this “primary mechanism for holding governments accountable for their actions“ (Norris 2000, p. 28). The media should provide enough information about all alternatives available so that voters can make a decision concerning different candidates. At election time, the voters should also have learned about any governmental misconduct that has happened during any government`s time in office to be able to react and vote politicians out for wrongdoing. Despite this “critical“ role towards the government which the media inhibit in an elite democracy, one should not confuse it`s function with the view of the media as a „champion of

the people, guarding the public interest, taking up grievances, and challenging government authorities.“ (Norris 2004, p. 28). On the contrary, the media should not question or challenge the underlying constitutional order of the system at all to avoid legitimacy crises . Similarly, the establishment of public discussion is only warranted if the political elites are divided on an issue. In this case, discussion in the public sphere among the citizens might provide the elite with more information to reach a decision. At all other times, however, public discussion of political issues is not only unnecessary but might even cause unruliness and undue involvement among the public, which in turn might impede government decisions and actions. Especially “debate that is not leading to a decision is potentially harmful, because it appears to call into question the ability of decision-makers to meet citizen needs effectively“ (Ferree et al. 2002, p. 294). The aforementioned role of and expectations towards the media can be expected to manifest in media content and especially in political media coverage. The social belief of any country or culture in a certain paradigm of democracy implies different discursive opportunity structures, mainly according to the legitimacy they ascribe to or imply for various forms and types of (political) media coverage.
Indicators for the elitist or more moderate representative paradigm of democracy can be found mainly regarding the type of article published, the level of analysis and opinion or speculation present in the coverage, the character of the cited sources, the journalistic attitude towards the government and the style of writing. Thus, overall we can assume that following assumptions regarding the outcomes of these discursive opportunity structures depending on four different democratic paradigms on the media coverage of political affairs can be made:

The media in an elite democracy…[77]
(1) ...concentrates on objective coverage of events instead of in-depths analyses of political processes or even speculations on outcomes or motives behind. Negative events and political scandals receive the most attention.
(2) ...relies on established and respected (if not elected) sources to legitimize its reporting: Elected representatives as well as external experts are the favored sources of information and

[77] “Media in a XYZ democracy” always meaning media in a country where the understanding of democracy mainly parallels the XYZ democratic paradigm.

are most present with direct quotes. Opinion polls might be featured to a somewhat lesser extent.

(3) ...is mostly limited to passive reporting and journalistic initiative is rather low. The legitimation of the existing political system is not questioned, and rarely there will be demands or suggestions voiced in media coverage. Nor will there be descriptions of the political process that focus on conflict.

(4) ...emphasizes detached, neutral reporting. Emotionality, personal narratives, and non-neutral tone are rare, as is a tabloid- or boulevard- style of writing.

Participatory Paradigm

Looking at the characteristics of an elite democracy, it seems that this kind of democracy "is likely to result in elite domination of public life, subject at best to periodic checks when the general public is activated." (Curran 2005). As Curran further puts it,

> it fails also to engage fully with the argument that democracies are devolved systems of power that entail responsibilities as well as rights and opportunities. This includes an obligation to be properly informed and concerned about major decisions taken by government. (p. 132)

It is this critique among others that proponents of pluralistic and participatory democratic theories seize and attempt to correct. Participatory theories of democracy differ from elite theories in several points, the most important being the normative function of democracy: While elite democracy views democracy as a method to provide empirical stability of the political system because citizens perceive a government as more legitimate if it is democratic, pluralist theories see democracy as actual ethical legitimation for government as well as a source for normative defensibility of the same. This view requires public participation as one of its basic principles, since only participation acknowledges equal autonomy for all citizens (Baker 2002). Participatory theory can be described on the basis of one main aspect: It views participation as intrinsic value which facilitates the education of citizens as well as the formation of a public opinion. The goal of participatory democracy is a maximization of chances for participation and the dissemination of democracy into all spheres of life. Democracy is not seen as a form of government or a market, as in elite or economic paradigms, but rather it is perceived as a way of life with communication at its center. Political participation in this sense means the definition, expression and balancing of interests, it means mutual communication and finding agreements and, not least, political participation

means mutual education. This type of public communication is based on a political and social equality that is as high as possible and that should be increased steadily by democracy. In contrary to the assumptions of Schumpeter and others, proponents of participatory theories argue that the preferences of the voters are endogenous artifacts of the political process rather than exogenous a priori interests. Furthermore, citizens are assumed to possess the competences for participation – either they are seen as politically interested and competent by default or they can become so by self-transformation.

Participatory paradigm - liberal/pluralist version. It is important at this point to mention that pluralistic theories of democracy do not define political participation as value in itself (like republican theories do), but rather as mechanism to manage various interests existing among citizens. The core assumption of pluralists is that a unchangeable plurality of interests, world views and values exists among the public, and that it is generally possible to articulate and organize all these interests. Democracy provides an instrument to take all these interests into account and allocate the appropriate weight to differing interests and their proponents. The goal of democracy is to enable fair bargaining and compromise among various interest groups[78] and to allow for a fair distribution of power – not the character of the leaders, but rather the fair representation of voter interests stands at the center of this paradigm. Political processes and content all are based and depend on cooperation and conflict between interests as well as the fair allocation of power. Therefore, pluralist democracy is build on three main features: Pluralistic structure, freedom and competition. Political institutions as well as the public sphere need to possess pluralistic features, every citizens needs to have the freedom to participate and lobby for his/her interests, and the processes of political decision making as well as public opinion forming need to be competitive in nature. Thus, pluralistic theories share with elite theories the assumption that political motivation among citizens is mainly based on self-interest – participation consist of self-interested bargaining, and the interest group which can assert the stronger fair pressure within the democratic system should win. If we again start by referring to Habermas` model of the public sphere, it becomes clear that the interpretation of the public sphere in pluralist democracies is already somewhat less restrictive than in elite democracies: Access to the

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[78] Interest groups in this sense include organized groups as well as simply accumulative numbers of citizens that subscribe to a certain interest.

public sphere is not anymore restricted to elite groups but rather depends on the size and strength of the interest group a citizens belongs to. The more prominent an interest is in society, the more pressure its proponents should be able to exert on the public as well as on government via the media. A similar case exists regarding the second crucial issue, the definition of public opinion: Public opinion in a pluralist democracy means the sum of all opinions promoted publicly by interest groups – in most cases, this will boil down to the stance of the most prominent interest group which wins the public bargains, but the institutionalized weighing process of democracy does not exclude the existence of several, similarly strong interests/opinions at any given time. In this case, the goal is to reach a fair compromise via fair debate in the public sphere. The more fair pressure an interest group can exert on the public, the more likely it is to gain the upper hand in influencing the outcome of a public debate.

Based on this assumption of a plurality of interests and the importance of the fair allocation of power[79], media in a pluralist democracy should primarily fulfill the following three functions:
(1) Inform individuals/groups when their interests are at stake
(2) Mobilize citizens to protect and promote their interests
(3) Inform government about the public`s demands and their strengths
Pluralists assume a segmentation of the audience: Different interests are catered to, represented and mobilized by different media. Thus, the ideal media type in a pluralistic democracy is partisan media. Partisan media does not have to comply with a standard of objectivity or balanced information required in elite democracies; on the contrary, partisan media is supposed to tailor its coverage to a certain group of society, depending on that group`s interests and needs. Neither individuals nor groups can be expected to be aware of situations when their interests are at stake at all times, therefore, they need mediat hat alert them to relevant issues and pending political decisions. Once awareness of a need for involvement has been created among an interest group, the media then need to mobilize its audience and convince it of the necessity to become involved and defend or promote its interests. Again, neither absolute objectivity nor detachment are expected from media in pluralistic democracies – in their quest for interest mobilization and support of a certain audience segment, the media will include not only a certain interpretation of events but also

[79] “Fair“ in this sense means according to the size and strength of an interest group.

political suggestions or even demands into its coverage. Interpretative and adversarial coverage should make out the core of reporting since they fulfill the crucial functions of purposefully selectively informing and concertedly mobilizing a clearly defined audience segment. Also, adversarial coverage provides the government with information as to which interests are represented in which strength among the populace; thus, government can base its political decision-making on knowledge about the interests and demands of the citizens, particularly the interests of those citizens which form the biggest and/or most influential interest group. The media in a pluralist democracy align with Schudson`s advocacy model of media systems, which "applies to media serving parties, beliefs and causes" (McQuail 2000, p. 54), however the media focus does not lie on a normative media agenda or the advocacy for marginalized, underrepresented groups in society but rather on the affiliation of certain media to certain social groups, whose interests the media advocates.

Participatory paradigm - republican version. Pluralist theories of democracy have received similar criticism as their elite counterparts – they are accused of assuming a view of the citizens which places too much emphasis on egocentrism and self-interest and not enough weight on the human ability for compromise and consent. Pluralist theories of democracy are criticized to assume a too negative image of the citizens and to neglect the possibility of a natural human orientation towards a common good and common goals. Republican theories of democracy put the emphasis on exactly this – the pursuit of a common good via dialogue in the public sphere. At this point it must be added that the distinction which is made in this thesis, namely between republican democracy and discourse democracy, is one which is not common; usually, discourse theory follows right after the pluralist paradigm, so to say. We adopted it from Baker (2002), as it provides an even more detailed assessment of the manifestation of democracy in the media. But as Habermas himself admits (1994), discourse theory is quite idealistic and therefore more difficult to assess in media content. The republican theory, on the other hand, can be seen as coming very close to Habermas` vision of the ideal democracy yet being somewhat more realistically oriented. Thus, the inclusion of this notion of democracy allows for closer analysis of how democracy is realized in political press coverage instead of applying unobtainable standards. Republican theories of democracy differ from the elite and pluralist democracy paradigm most importantly in their emphasis on

participation as an intrinsic value. Schmidt (2006) describes the disparity between both paradigms as follows,

> In one group of theories, a narrowly defined understanding of democracy as well as the balancing of direct and indirect popular government on the one hand and aims like the securing of rights and freedom, pluralism and governability on the other hand are emphasized. This is characteristic mainly for conservative, liberal or centristic theories with focus on locality. Contrary to this, the key word for a second group of theories is political participation of as many people as possible regarding as many issues as possible. Participation here is meant in the sense of participating, of taking part and of doing one`s part on the one hand and internal partaking in the events and fortunes of the polity on the other. (p.251)

The emphasis on the public pursuit of a common good is crucial for the definition of participatory or republican democratic theory: For republican democratic theory, as Habermas puts it, "politics is constitutive for the processes of society as a whole" (1994, p. 1). As part of the political process, citizens come together and discuss political and social matters in the public sphere, and during this process, they develop an understanding of their mutual dependency and equality. Through this communication taking place among ideally all citizens in the public sphere, solidarity and the recognition of a common good emerge – the idea of a public good is created in the public sphere, where citizens can formulate common ends and begin to pursue them politically. And this is what democracy is about: "[C]ommitting to common ends and then pursuing them"(Ferree et al 2002, p. 296). Citizens are willing to agree on and commit to a common good and to put this before their individual self interests – not only because of civic virtue, but also because the very process of democracy alleviates the dominance of individual self interests which play such an influential role in elite democracy (and in liberal democracy as well). The public sphere is a realm in which an idea of the common good can be agreed upon and then pursued; it is a realm in which people tend to become more aware of their connectedness to and dependence on others and in which thus a concern with the welfare of others becomes more likely. Baker (2002, p. 139) even argues that people tend to be more public-spirited when it comes to political matters than regarding for example economic matters, as they "see their interest in politics as predominantly related to a concern for justice or for a better world for everyone, even if these concerns are only intermittently dominant in their nonpolitical practices." If, he notes, people seem to vote based on their self-interest, this is most likely not due to a "narrowness of commitment, only of execution" (p. 140), meaning that voters might actually believe they are voting in favor of a common good even when this is not the case.

Habermas (1994) calls this view of politics, especially in its contemporary reading, a "communitarian view of politics" which assumes at its core an ethical community to which all citizens subscribe and which makes the orientation towards a general public good only possible. As explicated above, in participatory democracies, the public sphere is crucial for politics in the sense that it is here that citizens communicate about and agree upon a common good, and it is also here where the pursuit of the common good among the citizens takes place. It is especially important for government to be aware of this process of opinion formation and its results, to be able to react adequately. As Baker (2002) puts it,

> [A] central feature of democracy should be a (public) realm especially dedicated to people`s formulation and pursuit of the `common good`. Moreover, government should be designed to institutionalize a responsiveness to this public realm in which people consider the public good. (p. 140)

Republican democracy thus comes very close to fulfilling the notions of access and public opinion referred to in Habermas` definition of the public sphere. Ideally, access should be available to every citizen, and the public opinion consists of a consensus reached by all citizens regarding the common good. Frequently, this media role in existing democracies is supported by a system of public broadcasting or legal requirements concerning media coverage. From these preconditions, the following expectations towards the press can be inferred: It should be civil, inclusive, comprehensive, should support value and policy reflection and should focus only on general, not individual, mobilization. The media is expected to function as a platform on which citizens can communicate about ideas of the common good and how to reach the same. For this, it needs to support public deliberation among everyone, emphasizing not (fair) pressure from various interest groups but dialogue among all participating. Assuming that civic virtue and the ability to agree to a common good is based on a common set of values and ethics, the press should also be "thoughtfully discursive, not merely factually informative" (Baker 2002, p. 148) and reflect these values and ethics. Besides this the media need to provide the citizens with comprehensive information about political affairs to enable public discourse on political matters which concern the common good. However, unlike in liberal democracies, the media does not have the duty to mobilize citizens when their interests are at stake. Rather, if necessary, the media should promote general participation and, if feasible, offer possibilities for the citizens to engage themselves politically for the common good. Through this presentation of options for

democratic participation, political disinterest, apathy and purely self-interested political behavior can additionally be prevented, republican democrats argue.
Indicators for the participatory paradigm of democracy can for one be found regarding the sources that appear in media coverage – they will be more numerous and diverse than in an elitist democracy and there will not be any strong reliance on established sources, elected representatives or experts. Rather, ordinary citizens and other non-established sources will appear more numerously. Additionally, liberal and republican types of participatory democracy differ slightly in their media content characteristics.

Thus in summary, media coverage of politica in a participatory-liberal/pluralist democracy...
(1) ...prominently features opinionated coverage, analysis and partisan reporting.
(2) ...emphasizes journalistic initiative: It contains journalistic suggestions and/or demands, and provides coverage which roots not from external (press conferences, stump speeches, etc.) but from internal, journalistic initiative.
(3) ...is not neutral but rather partisan in tone and does not neccessarily separate news from opinion.
In a participatory-republican democracy, on the other hand, political media coverage...
(1) ...relies not so much on opinonated coverage but rather on background information and analysis.
(2) ...stresses consensus and constructive dialogue in its reporting, presenting pro- as well as contra- arguments and employing a rather neutral tenor throughout.
Again, the media in both paradigms have in common the reliance on various and numerous sources as political participation of their audience is crucial. They differ however in the way of motivating their audience, in the liberal paradigm relying on mobilization via self-interest and conflict of interest groups, in the republican paradigm relying on mobilization via common good and the search for a consensus.

Discourse Theory of Democracy

The paradigm of discourse democracy was first introduced by Jürgen Habermas in his 1994 paper Three Normative Models of Democracy. First, Habermas distinguished the discourse model of democracy from the (above described) liberal and republican paradigms, which he views as flawed in different ways: The liberal paradigm, he argues, does not take

into account the original meaning of democracy as “public use of reason“ (p. 3) but rather just concentrates on the constitutional channeling of the fair distribution of power among interest groups. Democracy therefore is, again, more instrument than process, which aims at administrative accomplishments in the allocation of power. The republican paradigm, on the other hand, views the process of political opinion formation as constitutive for society – society is formed via public will formation, via the awareness of belonging and dependency in a community. However, republican democracy suffers from an “ethical constriction of discourse“ (p. 4), says Habermas. While it does focus on dialog instead of administrative processing of interests, it assumes the a priori affiliation to an ethical community as necessary for the public agreement on a common good. Habermas proposes a third paradigm which combines aspects of both republican and liberal democratic theories and which puts communication at its center: The discourse paradigm of democracy. It is characterized by three main aspects:

(1) Institutionalization of communicative proceedings and presuppositions
(2) Coexistence of common good and compromise
(3) Coexistence of several autonomous public spheres

Discourse democracy does not rely either on a previous ethical convergence of the citizens to agree on a common good nor does it allocate power based on the pressure an interest group can exert. Instead, discourse democracy is based on institutionalized communication procedures which ensure that, first, the better argument wins, and second, fair bargaining can take place when needed. Habermas argues that politics does not consist of pure consensus nor solely conflict between interests but that “compromises make up the bulk of political processes“ (p. 5) – democracy therefore needs to provide communicative opportunities for compromise as well as consensus-finding. This can only be achieved by the institutionalization and structure of public communicative proceedings. Democracy is not based on a collectively acting citizenry or on administrative power allocation but on “legally institutionalized will-formation and culturally mobilized publics“ (p. 10); public rationalization of political issues and decision-making “means more than mere legitimation but less than the constitution of political power.“ (p. 9). Democracy provides a platform for bargaining as well as for the discursive development of a common good based on universal (not communitarian) principles of justice, and it does so by providing autonomous public

spheres for the discursive development of separate social groups and inclusive means and channels of communication. In ideal speech situations, the better argument instead of the more established speaker can win, and through the conscious integration of what Habermas calls „autonomous actors“ (meaning less-organized grassroot groups) into the public process of deliberation, personalized experience and marginalized actors can gain more significance. The basic pillar of this proceduralist concept of democracy can be seen in its reliance on communicative structures and procedures which, if correctly institutionalized, can secure an inclusive public sphere which relies on universal principles of justice to find compromise and consensus among a citizenry which is diverse and driven by self-interest as much as by the search for the common good.

In a discourse democracy, issues of variety and inclusion stand at the center of the idea of the public sphere. To quote Habermas` (2001) definition again:

> By the public sphere we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. Then they behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy. Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion – that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions – about matters of general interest. (p. 102)

Access, in a discourse democracy, truly means access for all. Access to the public sphere should not be restricted by affiliation to the political elite, to an interest group or to any ethical community. Rather, the main concern of discourse theories of democracy is to enable everyone to participate in public communication equally and to allow established as well as marginalized civic groups and actors to promote their political interests and to take part in the discursive formation and public pursuit of an idea of the common good.

This can be facilitated by two aspects: First, by providing channels, ways and proceedings of communication which are open and usable for everyone and second, by assuming and expecting the coexistence for various public spheres which are autonomous from the economy as well as from administration and which provide citizen groups spaces for self-definition and debate. More specifically, public communication should generally be based on “ideal speech situations“ in which everyone has the opportunity to voice his/her view or opinion in a way

that are consistent with his/her talents or situation, and present arguments to defend or promote it. Discourse should take place in such a manner that at the end of the deliberation process, the better idea (instead of the stronger proponent) should win and should ideally be agreed upon by all – in other words, "an ideally conducted public discourse should produce a gradual consensus over time"(Ferree et al., 2002, p. 305) or, in Habermas` words, „something approaching public opinion can be formed"(1989, p.136). Additionally, everyone should be able to take part in a process of self-definition and deliberation within his or her subgroup. Established as well as smaller or marginalized social groups should have a space in which they can become aware of and jointly define their interests and ideas which might then diffuse to the larger public. For the media in a discourse democracy, this means several things: The media landscape should be diverse. It should provide more general as well as very specifically targeted outlets as to support the development and existence of various public spheres and realms for unrestricted deliberation. The media should include various narrative styles in their coverage as to allow citizens from different backgrounds and lifeworlds to recognize themselves and their experiences in media coverage. Also, this should provide a diverse public with sufficient and appropriate channels and ways of communication to facilitate opportunities and increase motivation and interest in participation in public deliberation. The media should emphasize civility and constructive deliberation in their coverage instead of competition and argument. The media should seek out "autonomous actors" as sources and contributors to provide grassroot perspectives alongside information from established public speakers. Indicators for the discourse paradigm of democracy are mainly characterized by variety and inclusion. Setting a similar focus as the republican paradigm, namely dialogue between citizens, discourse democracy assumes that simple inclusion of various and also non-established sources is not enough. Rather, media coverage needs to provide various ways of communicating, integrating the language of different life worlds into its content as to truly allow inclusive communication among the citizens in the public sphere. Therefore neither detached, neutral reporting nor reliance on one style of writing suffices in a discourse democracy. In short, political media coverage in a discourse democracy...

(1) ...needs to employ various styles and forms to account for the variety of different life worlds of its audience. Not everyone, it is argued, can be expected to be interested in or understand or support detached, neutral political argumentation. But personal narratives, for

example, can introduce political issues into the lives of otherwise non-included citizens by likening them to their lifeworld and employing a kind of communication which is often excluded from established media discourse.

(2) ...emphasizes various different voices by integrating long quotes and numerous non-established sources.

(3) ...supports discourse by constructively linking those various voices and viewpoints together and thereby providing a forum for deliberation. This forum differs from the platforms that participatory paradigms offer in that it does not by default exclude marginalized voices by not providing means of communication which speak to the lifeworlds of those marginalized groups or individuals.

Table 6

Differences between Elite, Participatory and Discourse Democracy

	Elite democracy	**Liberal democracy**	**Republican democracy**	**Discourse democracy**
Function of democracy	Method for chosing leaders, for legitimizing governance and for facilitating competition	Mechanism to take into account and weigh all interests present in the populace	Constituting society as a political and ethical community	Institutionalization of public will formation and cultural mobilization of publics
Goal	Balance of power	Fair recognition of interest	Equality of opportunities within an ethical community	Inclusion via institutionalized communicative procedures
Focus	Legitimization; Governing; Representation	Participation: Mobilization	Participation: Dialogue	Discourse 1)
Citizen motivation	Avoid elite misconduct	Bargain for self-interests	Pursue common good	Institutionalized structures of communication
Role of the media	Information; monitoring	Information; mobilization	Information; platform for dialogue	Information; enabler of communication; inclusion
Content indicators	Type and number of sources, journalistic initiative (suggestions, demands, story initiatives), party evaluations, personalization, tone, style of writing, context frames, conflict frames, emotionality, scandals, strategies of objectivity, variety of perspectives, linking of perspectives...			

1) More inclusive than dialog; focusing on ideal speech situations.

In summary, objective, event-focused coverage, negativity, a focus on scandals, the integration of mainly elite and expert sources as well as low journalistic initiative and a lack of criticism towards the government, suggestions or conflict are quality characteristics for the political media coverage if applying elite democracy standards. Opinionated and partisan coverage, analysis, journalistic initiative and suggestions are quality characteristics for political media coverage under application of the participatory-pluralist paradigm, while analysis, a focus on consensus and dialog and a neutral tenor mark quality coverage under the participatory-republican paradigm of democracy. The somewhat utopian discourse paradigm defines the inclusion of various, possibly unorthodox styles (like personal narratives) as well as long quotes, non-established sources and dialog as indicator for quality political coverage. The question which emerges is which standards of quality are applied, so to say, to their own coverage by the journalists in the four analyzed countries? Which characteristics can be found in the coverage of the different countries? We expect certain trends towards different democratic paradigms in the Democratic Corporatist as well as in the Liberal Model, parallel to the findings of Ferree et al. (2002) which suggest elite tendencies in Germany and rather participatory-oriented coverage in the US, however we also assume that national coverage will not completely correspond to one of the four paradigms. Instead, we expect a mix of quality claims in each country`s coverage, making the analysis of "good" versus "bad" journalism more complex but also more realistic than most empirical approaches existing hitherto.

Summary of Research Questions and Hypotheses

After having examined the theoretical foundations for the present study, and having defined the relevant contextual factors for a cross-national and longitudinal comparative analysis of political press content, we will now present the respective hypotheses which can be derived from the number of assumptions we concluded in the previous chapters. To provide a basis for the following list of hypotheses, we want to recall the aim of this study, namely to suggest a large-scale empirical framework with which to facilitate (1) the detailed examination of the interplay between internal and external factors in the continuous development of political media coverage in different Western democracies as well as in an overview of the Western hemisphere, (2) the analysis of the actual effects and indicators of the ongoing process of mediatization on various types of political press coverage at various points in time, (3) the

assessment of manifestations of transnational processes of convergence in various types of political press coverage, and lastly (4) a suggestion on how the the normative values and judgements connected with the development of a more transnationally homogeneous style of political media coverage can be assessed comparatively by applying different understandings of democracy. Previously, we have looked at the way in which multi-level opportunity structures draw a network in which national factors on the macro-, meso- and micro-level impact patterns and characteristics of political media coverage by creating various structures of discursive opportunities for journalists as well as other media and political actors. We have then examined in which way longitudinal processes like mediatization and transnational convergence can be expected to influence these dynamics and thus the resulting patterns of political media coverage, and have furthermore proceeded to analyze and describe the four Western democracies examined in this study as specific clusters of contextual factors based on their media and political systems as well as organizational structures, with the help of which a comparative analysis of national political press coverage patterns as well as an examination of the effects of increasing mediatization and transnational convergence is made possible. Finally, we have proposed a way in which to examine the bearings which different understandings of democracy can have on characteristics of political press coverage, which also enables a normative evaluation of the democratic quality of various patterns of political press coverage. In the following empirical examination of collected newspaper data, we will slightly modify our approach to first take a look at the national and organizational features of political press coverage individually and in comparison, before we will then analyze the effects of mediatization and crossnational phenomena on the coverage patterns and, finally, provide an assessment of the democratic standards applicable to each country`s coverage. Hence, we will commence with national examinations, followed by cross-national comparison, followed by a longitudinal analysis and an analysis of standards of democracy present. Through this approach, we aim to first create an understanding of the unique national nature of political press coverage as foundation, on which following the analysis of the role of mediatization and transnational processes of convergence as well as the assessment of different democratic understandings in comparison between all four individual national environments can take place. Beforehand, we will subsequently condense the assumptions established in the previous chapters to form core hypotheses regarding the objectives of the study. The reason for this approach is to enable a clearer, more focused view on the

consequences of numerous, complex and interrelated factors of influence by clustering them according to larger, comprehensive theoretical understandings to also make the bulk of available data better accessible. In the condensed hypotheses, we focus on the coverage patterns which have previously been established as potential outcomes of various influential factors. By this, we hope to provide a more comprehendible way to understand and interpret the findings of a study that has at its core the aim to analyze and make more accessible a complex network of interrelating, sometimes overlapping and often mutually influential factors on the national, cross-national as well as longitudinal level.

Overall Research Questions

The following are the research questions the present study seeks to answer:

RQ1: How does press coverage differ among countries?

RQ2: How does press coverage differ between newspaper types?

RQ3: How does press coverage over time differ between countries and which transnational processes are visible over time?

RQ3a: To which extent is coverage in the different countries governed by media-, commercial and professional logic?

RQ4: To which factors do differences among the analyzed political press coverage correspond the closest: Organizational differences between types of newspapers, systemic differences on the national level or transnational dynamics across countries and over time?

RQ5: What standards of democratic news coverage can be distinguished across countries?

Hypotheses

Below, we present a summary of the assumptions derived from the previous chapters, and their condensation into several main hypotheses for empirical examination.

National factors of influence - systemic, individualistic and organizational effects on political press coverage. First, we summarize the suppositions regarding national influences on political media content on the macro-, micro- and meso-level.

Influences on the macro-level: Political and media system characteristics. Our assumptions regarding the influence of political system characteristics on political media coverage were the following:

(1) Personalization can be expected to be high in the US and high and growing in Great Britain but low in Switzerland and Germany.

(2) In Switzerland, a focus on consensus and the integration of dialog is more likely whereas in Great Britain, a focus on conflict can be expected.

(3) Swiss political media coverage focuses more on political issues and substance while US coverage concentrates more on strategy.

(4) In the US, an emphasis on US-related political events can be expected while due to its geographical location, Swiss media coverage will pay more attention to international and foreign events.

(5) The amount of political coverage in Switzerland can be assumed to be relatively large.

(6) Political media coverage in Great Britain will presumably be characterized by journalistic initiative, negativism and critical coverage towards the government.

(6a) Due to growing governmental attempts at news management beginning in the Thatcher years and increasing during the Blair terms, the opposite could be the case, too: A dominance of government-initiated stories, long soundbites and non-critical media coverage.

(7) As partisanship in Germany has abated during the last decades, political coverage can also be expected to be less partisan today than it was during the 1960s.

(8) The large number of parties in Germany makes a concentration on issue coverage more likely than a focus on political personnel.

(9) Election processes as well as political communication in Germany in general are mostly party-dominated, which presumably leads to less personalization in Germany than in the US.

(10) The process of party building and ideologization currently taking place in the American political landscape on the other hand can be assumed to lead to heightened partisanship in media reporting. Additionally, the polarization of political parties might cause a higher level of negativism in political reporting, partly based on attack statements of political actors.

(11) Due to the comparative closeness between journalists and politicians, and the socialization of Swiss journalists into the consensus system, little advocacy journalism can be expected in Swiss political media coverage. The same is true for critical coverage about the

government and a focus on conflict. Coverage integrating citizens` perspective and suggestions towards the government can be expected though.

(12) A high number and broad range of elite sources can be expected in Swiss political coverage, as the integration of the political elite is high. Elite sources, as explained with regard to the consequences of consensus democracy, will encompass a rather broad societal spectrum.

(13) The number of experts as sources in British political media coverage can be expected to have increased over time.

Our assumptions regarding the influence of media system characteristics on political media coverage were the following:

(1) The objectivity norm in reporting is most prevalent in the US, lower in Great Britain, even less so but increasing in Germany and low in Switzerland.

(2) Due to their history of political commentary journalism, the focus on analysis is stronger in the Democratic Corporatist countries than in the countries of the Liberal Model.

(3) The variety of perspectives given in articles is higher in the US and Switzerland than in Germany.

(4) Personalization is high in the US and increasing in Great Britain and Germany (somewhat lower than in Great Britain) but low in Switzerland.

(5) Partisan reporting is common though decreasing in Great Britain, still high but decreasing in Germany, visible to a slightly lesser part in Switzerland, and less common but growing in the US.

(6) Negativism in political reporting is increasingly high in the US, high in Great Britain, less so in Switzerland and even fewer in Germany.

(7) Focus on conflict is common in Great Britain and even growing the US, less so in Germany and not likely at all in Swiss coverage.

(8) Critical or aggressive coverage of the government is most likely in Great Britain but not expected in Germany or Switzerland.

(9) Established sources can be expected to dominate the coverage in Germany and Switzerland.

(10) Opinionated reporting can be expected in Germany and Switzerland and, to a lesser degree, Great Britain.

(11) US coverage will include a higher number of staged events, short soundbites and media self-references than coverage in the other three countries.
(12) In Great Britain, strategically framed coverage can be expected, issue-focus will be low.
(13) In Germany, issue frames as well as analytical and interpretive coverage are likely.
(14) In Switzerland, a focus on dialogue and consensus can be expected.
(15) Sensationalism can be expected to be low in Germany.

Influences on the micro-level: Political communication culture, journalistic norms and journalistic role conceptions. We will now first summarize influential factors corresponding to the micro-level concerning individual journalistic perceptions - the reason to bring those forward before listing the meso-level factors lies in the more immediate similarity between systemic effects on the macro-level and the aggregation of individual effects on the micro-level. This is specially true for the purposes of this study, as we do not examine journalistic work on an individual level, but rather assume a national aggregation and similarity of political communication as well as journalistic norms and role conceptions, whereas on the meso-level we do examine directly the difference between differing organizational coverage outcome. Thus, we decided to group the hypotheses for these two levels together, followed by an examination of the meso-level separately. Our assumptions regarding the influence of political communication culture, journalistic norms and journalistic role conceptions on political media coverage were the following:
(1) Due to the history of German and Swiss journalists as commentators and due to the fusion of writing and editing in German and Swiss newsrooms, we expect higher legitimacy for coverage including interpretation and opinion in German and Swiss coverage than in British and US coverage.
(2) Political media coverage characteristics caused by a dominance of media logic as well as a great distance between political and media actors (i.e. criticism towards the government, etc.) will be most frequent in the US.
(3) Political media coverage characteristics caused by a dominance of media logic will be least frequent in Germany; characteristics caused by political logic will be dominant. The small distance between political and media actors will be most visible in German political media coverage (i.e. little criticism towards the government), and a tendency towards elite

democracy (i.e. dominance of elite political actors in coverage) is likely. Increased commercialization can be expected over time.
(4) Proximity between political and media actors (i.e. little criticism towards the government and symbolic consensus) will be visible in Switzerland.
(5) Indicators of objectivity will be higher in the US than in the other three countries as the notion of professionalism in North America is much more closely linked to the concept of objectivity and neutrality and thus creates discursive opportunity structures (i.e. resonance and legitimacy) for this type of reporting.
(6) Due to the history of German and Swiss journalists as commentators and due to the fusion of writing and editing in German and Swiss newsrooms, the legitimacy for coverage including interpretation and opinion will be higher than in Great Britain and the US.

From this result the following, overall hypotheses regarding the influence of national systemic and individualistic factors on political press content:
H1: Political media coverage in the US and Great Britain (i.e. in the countries of the Liberal Model) is characterized by personalization, strategy frames, negativism, conflict-focus and a generally pragmatic approach to political reporting.
H1a: Coverage in the US is characterized by ethnocentrism, personalization, strategic reporting, objectivity[80], a variety of perspectives, reporting on staged events, media self-references, and increasing partisanship. There is little interpretive or opinionated coverage.
H1b: Coverage in Great Britain is characterized by criticism towards the government, a focus on conflict, negativism, journalistic initiative, increasing personalization, increasing integration of expert sources, and heavy but declining partisanship. There is little interpretive or opinionated coverage as well as little objectivity.
H2: Political media coverage in Germany and Switzerland (i.e. in the countries of the Democratic Corporatist Model) shows less conflict, less negativism, less personalization, little to no criticism of the government or governing, less strategic framing, a greater reliance on established sources and a generally sacerdotal approach to political reporting.

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[80] ”Objectivity“ here is used as abbreviation and always refers to the realization of the norm of objective reporting within press coverage and is not meant to denote actual objectivity, which to define and assess would demand philosophic discussion.

H2a: Coverage in Germany is characterized by the integration of elite sources, interpretive and opinionated reporting, issue coverage, high but declining partisanship, and increasing objectivity. There is little personalization, sensationalism and criticism towards the government or negativism.
H2b: Coverage in Switzerland is characterized by dialog, a focus on consensus, issue coverage, an integration of citizens` perspective and suggestions or demands towards the governing, a reliance on various sources but domination of elite sources, partisanship, interpretive and opinionated reporting and a general dominance of political logic. There is little criticism towards the governing, little negativism and little personalization.

Influences on the meso-level: Organizational newspaper types. Our assumptions regarding the influence of different organizational newspaper types on political press coverage were the following:
(1) Due to their higher dependence on advertising revenue, commercial logic can be expected to be more dominant in regional than in national newspapers.
(2) Due to their lower financial and human resources, political coverage in regional newspapers can be expected to be less in-depth than in national newspapers.
(3) The close connection to the place of publication means a stronger national focus of the regional newspapers as well as a more sacerdotal coverage of politics than in national newspapers.
(4) As they fulfill functions of identification and orientation, coverage in regional newspapers can be expected to be closer to the audience than coverage in national newspapers.
(5) Due to the higher standards which national newspapers are expected to fulfill, due to better working conditions, financing, as well as better educated staff, coverage in national newspapers will be more in-depth, will provide more contextual information and less personalization.

Following, the hypotheses regarding the influence of newspaper types:
H3: Political coverage in national newspapers is more in-depth and provides more contextual information and less personalization.

H4: Political coverage in regional newspapers displays a higher level of commercial logic, a more sacerdotal approach to politics and a greater proximity to the audience than political coverage in national newspapers.

Transnational factors of influence: Effects of longitudinal, cross-national processes of change on political press coverage. Second, we summarize the suppositions regarding transnational influences on political media content on a longitudinal, cross-national scale. Our assumptions regarding the influence of mediatization and transnational processes of convergence on political media coverage were the following:

(1) Mediatization as well as commercialization and professionalization are increasing in all four countries but stronger in the countries of the Liberal than the ones of the Democratic Corporatist Model, where political logic is still relatively strong.

(1a) Switzerland`s particular political logic of consensus, slow decision-making, group involvement, and direct democracy directly opposes conflict focus, fast news, personalization, negativism/criticism towards authorities and simplification.

(1b) In Germany, political factors like coalition building, the relevance of political parties, and the close distance between media and politics limit features of media and commercial logic like conflict focus, personalization, negativism/criticism towards authorities and simplification.

(1c) In Great Britain, the increasing political power of the Prime Minister, the great distance between media and politics, the strong role of the political opposition, the tradition of governmental secrecy and the de facto two-party system promote facets of media and commercial logic like personalization, criticism/negativism towards authorities, focus on conflict and strategy, sensationalism, simplification and polarization. The strong role of parties however might limit some of these characteristics.

(1d) In the US, the de facto two party system, the system of presidential democracy, and the distant relationship between media and politics similarly facilitate some aspects of media and commercial logic, specifically simplification, polarization and focus on conflict, personalization, emphasis on strategy and criticism/negativism towards authorities.

(2) Analytic instead of event-centered reporting is becoming more common in all four countries.

Correspondingly, our hypotheses regarding the influences of mediatization and transnational processes on political press content are in summary:

H5: Adaption processes and fusion of various coverage characteristics (i.e. hybridization) are more common than unilinear adoption processes like Americanization.

H6: Professional and commercial logic have grown stronger over time in all four countries. This means that characteristics like visualization, simplification, polarization, conflict, personalization, negativism, metacoverage, objectivity and analysis- focused reporting have increased in press coverage over time to also include sensationalism, scandalization, and a change either towards more partisan or more neutral coverage. Additionally, articles will be shorter and there will be less international coverage.

H7: Professional and commercial logic are most dominant in the US coverage, dominant in British coverage, less dominant in German coverage and least dominant in Swiss coverage.

H8: Criticism towards the governing, personalization and strategic reporting will be highest in US coverage as they are facilitated by the political context.

H9: Criticism towards the governing will be low in German and Swiss coverage, as a sacerdotal approach to political coverage can be expected while a pragmatic approach is predominant in Great Britain and the US.

The role of democratic quality standards regarding characteristics of political press coverage. Lastly, we summarize the suppositions concerning the application of democratic paradigms on political media coverage. Our assumptions regarding the realization of democratic news standards were the following:

Media in an elite democracy…

(1) ...concentrates on a objective coverage of events instead of in-depths analyses of political processes or even speculations on outcomes or motives behind. Negative events and political scandals receive the most attention.

(2) ...relies on established and respected (if not elected) sources to legitimize its reporting: Elected representatives as well as external experts are the favored sources of information and are most present with direct quotes. Opinion polls might be featured to a somewhat lesser extent.

(3) ...is mostly limited to passive reporting and journalistic initiative is rather low. The legitimation of the existing political system is not questioned, and rarely there will be

demands or suggestions voiced in media coverage. Nor will there be descriptions of the political process that focus on conflict.

(4) ...emphasizes detached, neutral reporting. Emotionality, personal narratives, and non-neutral tone are rare, as is a tabloid- or boulevard- style of writing.

Media in a participatory-liberal democracy…

(1) ...prominently features opinionated coverage, analysis and partisan reporting.

(2) ...emphasizes journalistic initiative: It contains journalistic suggestions and/or demands, and provides coverage which roots not from external (press conferences, stump speeches, etc.) but from internal, journalistic initiative.

(3) ...is not neutral but rather partisan in tone and does not neccessarily separate news from opinion.

In a participatory-republican democracy, on the other hand, political media coverage...

(1) ...relies not so much on opinonated coverage but rather on background information and analysis.

(2) ...stresses consensus and constructive dialogue in its reporting, presenting pro- as well as contra- arguments and employing a rather neutral tenor throughout.

Media in a discourse democracy…

(1) ...needs to employ various styles and forms to account for the variety of different life worlds of its audience. Not everyone, it is argued, can be expected to be interested in or understand or support detached, neutral political argumentation. But personal narratives, for example, can introduce political issues into the lifes of otherwise non-included citizens by likening them to their lifeworld and employing a kind of communication which is often excluded from established media discourse.

(2) ...emphasizes various different voices by integrating long quotes and numerous non-established sources.

(3) ...supports discourse by constructively linking those various voices and viewpoints together and thereby providing a forum for deliberation. This forum differs from the platforms that participatory paradigms offer in that it does not by default exclude marginalized voices by not providing means of communication which speak to the lifeworlds of those marginalized groups or individuals.

From theses assumptions we condense the following hypothesis regarding the realization of democratic news standards in political press coverage:
H10: While no exact materialization of any model can be expected in any country`s political media coverage, based on the findings of Ferree et al. and on the characteristics of political communication culture in each country, German and Swiss political affairs coverage is likely to tend towards elite democratic standards, while British and American political affairs coverage can be expected to tend towards more participatory standards.

Method

Study Design

To assess the research questions and hypotheses emanating from the the complex theoretical framework presented is a demanding task. To speak with Esser & Pfetsch (2004), ”new challenges demand extended designs“ (p. 400), and in line with their argument for “highly contextualized comparative study” (ibid., p. 298) a content analysis was conducted which encompassed four countries, eight newspapers, four years and 45 variables. But comparative media research, while highly necessary and useful, also brings with it a number of epistemological and methodological difficulties. In correspondence to Hanitzsch (2007), the most prominent of these are that (1) establishing (functional) equivalence between countries is difficult, (2) a large amount of differences can impede meaningful comparison, (3) variance within a culture or country might be greater than in between countries, (4) differences and similarities can be ascribed both to national context or transnational diffusion, (5) assumptions of universalism and/or ethnocentrism produce results out of context. The present study tries to account for all these difficulties as will be explicated in the discussion of our methodological approach below, but of course any cultural socialization cannot be suppressed entirely, nor can the complexity of the research subject be lessened. However, all researchers were aware of both facts from the beginning of this study and consciously took them into account with regard to their work.

Before detailing the sample examined, it has to be noted that the present study is part of a larger research project, which also includes future analyses of the years between 1960 and 2007, as well as analyses of additional countries as well as newspaper types (e.g. tabloids) and

television programming. This of course also influenced the selection of the sample for this study for pragmatic reasons.

Sample

With view of the breadth of influential factors on various levels, combined with the goal of a longitudinal as well as cross-nationally comparative analysis, one of the first, and most obvious, necessities is to confine the matter studied to a manageable amount without losing focus of the theoretical foundation and the crucial questions to investigate. This naturally leads to certain limitations to be dealt regarding the study design: Specifically, within the scope of the present study, we were facing issues of accessibility of material, enormous dimensions of relevant coverage (i.e. articles), and the necessity to assemble a team of coders able to linguistically as well as culturally comprehend and "de-code" articles originating from several different countries and decades. Thus, we had to address especially various issues of selection pragmatically: First, the selection of countries: Switzerland, Germany, Great Britain and the USA were selected for the analysis. This selection ensured an adequate interpretation and understanding of the content analyzed, as the main researcher as well as the project leader (both from Germany) are familiar with all four countries as they had lived and studied in Great Britain, Switzerland and the US. Furthermore, the selection of two German- and two English-speaking countries facilitated the employment of coders fluent in both languages and cultures. Through this selection, two of Hallin & Mancini`s models were represented in our sample, as well as two different language-regions. Additionally, the selected countries include North America and Europe as well as EU- and non-EU member states. With this selection we were also able to address problems of equivalence, universalism and ethnocentrism: The more familiar researchers are with a country, the more the selection of functionally equivalent newspapers is facilitated and ethnocentric misinterpretation of the data due to a lack of contextual cultural knowledge is prevented.

Second, the selection of newspapers: Two daily newspapers were selected from each country to take into account not only systemic differences on the national level but as well differences on the organizational meso-level. As explained earlier, we included quality national newspapers which function as opinion leaders and intermedia agenda setters and thus play a comparatively large role in the media landscape of each country, even if their circulation is

topped by tabloid or local papers. Regional dailies were selected as counterpart to the influential national media. This decision was made since a bigger functional equivalence across the selected countries can be reached regarding regional newspapers than regarding tabloid newspapers, which are for example non-existent in Switzerland and rather scarce on the US market while in Britain, the so-called rainbow- or yellow press is a large market segment and Europe`s most read newspaper is a German tabloid (the *BILD*). The national newspapers *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Germany), *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Switzerland), *The Times* (Great Britain) and *New York Times* (USA) were picked according to their relevance in the respective countries and their presence in existing comparative literature. The selection of regional papers, on the other hand, was based on the typical character of each paper and, as mentioned, maximal functional equivalence. This presented a not so easy task, as regional newspapers by default are rooted closely in their respective local environment and history, lacking the international relevance and thus obvious comparability of the national press flagships. Due to their typical national history and character as well as similar relative size and importance , the *Rheinische Pos*t (Germany), *Berner Zeitung* (Switzerland), *Birmingham Mail* (Great Britain) and *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (USA) were included in the sample; all of these having previously been used in communication research as typical examples for regional newspapers. The *Birmingham Mail* is the only one in this selection which has lost some of its regional relevance over the last years, however as it held large relevance as characteristic, representative regional newspaper in Great Britain during most of the past decades, we still decided to include it in the sample. One more significant advantage of the selected publications was the rather pragmatic fact that for each of them, issues throughout the last 50 years are archived and accessible, which is mostly not the case with regional newspapers. And this leads to the third and last challenge: The longitudinal character of our analysis.

Transnational dynamic processes do not happen overnight, but can rather be assumed to take place over longer periods of time. With regard to the process of mediatization and its components of commercial and professional logic, the period from the 1960s to recent years offers the most interesting era, as it spans from the “golden years“ of journalism before the dominance of commercial television and largely untouched by commercial competition and right finances, includes the times of Watergate, Vietnam and the rise of the notion of

investigative journalism in North America in the late sixties and early seventies of the last century, and ends with an epoch in which the degeneration and commercialization of the press vis-a-vis commercial television and the Internet have become a public issue of debate. Additionally, as the entire project also includes an analysis of television news, a point in time had to be selected for which it was possible to acquire any material at all – and this proved to be very difficult for any television newscasts, no matter what country, before 1960. As points of comparison, two years from four decades were chosen: 1960/61, 1972/73, 1994/95 and 2006/07 - the two most recent years at the time of the collection of material in 2007/08. For a more clear-cut confrontation, this study presents an analysis of the two endpoints of this selection, namely the 1960s vs. the millennial years. In a first trial we tried to include all articles with political content, which however led to a far too high number of articles as to possibly code within the duration of the project. Furthermore, as we preferred to analyze articles which were actually acknowledged and noticed by the average reader and hence contained a higher relevance, we decided against concentrating our analysis on the political book of the newspapers[81] and instead sampled one random issue per month for each newspaper and from this included all articles of political content that were in any way mentioned or referred to on the title page of these issues.[82]

Codebook

Following, we will give a short overview over the codebook and operationalizations. Besides formal variables like size, location and length of the article, the codebook contained 35 content- and style-related variables which are based on existing research and literature

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[81] This would have been difficult in any event, as most papers changed their layout over the course of the 50 years and especially in the 1960s the labeling of specific books or resorts was unusual in regional newspapers.

[82] There was a unique situation regarding *The Times* in 1960, as in these years the title page of the paper did not contain any news but was rather reserved for obituaries and advertisements. While political news had arrived on the title page in 1961, we had to devise a different scheme to select articles from *The Times* in 1960. However, since the sample from 1961 resulted in an sufficiently high number to include into our analysis, we decided to exclude the (due to the different selection mechanism very high number of) articles from 1960 from *The Times* from our sample to prevent systematic distortions.

regarding the concepts of interest for the present study, and whose relevance has been explicated throughout the first half of this thesis. It is important to note for the later report on our findings that sometimes one variable can be relevant for the assessment of several theoretical concepts, and that in the assessment of a concept not all variables might or need to occur at all times. This is due to the many complex interrelations between concepts, and it will be declared in detail which variables were used for the assessment of individual research questions or hypotheses in the chapters detailing the results. For a clear overview over the codebook, we grouped all codebook-variables with regard to the concepts most relevant to the present analysis in table 7. However, these clusters might at certain points during the analysis necessarily be disassembled for the purpose of examining a research question or hypothesis in more detail.

Table 7

Overview over Coverage Patterns and Corresponding Codebook Variables

Coverage Patterns	**Operationalization (Variables)**
General	Placement, length, size, locations and topics
Personalization	Persons vs. institutions
	Politicians as private persons
Negativism	Scandalization frame
	Competence frame
	Conflict (vs. consensus) frame
	Dialog
	Article tone
Analytical coverage	Strategic frame
	Type of article
	Strategy frame
	Context frame
	Analysis-focused coverage (analysis index)
Objectivity (vs. opinionated coverage)	Separation of news and opinion

Coverage Patterns	Operationalization (Variables)
	Implicit comments
	Expert sources
	Quotes
	“Hard facts first“
Partisan Coverage (vs. neutral coverage)	Evaluation of parties
Diversity	Narratives
	Variety of perspectives
	Variety of sources
	Type of sources
Simplification	Sensational frame
	Short stories
	Visualization
	Attention to politics
	Infoboxes
	Article style
	Emotionality
Metacoverage	Media- or PR-mentions
Journalistic Initiative	Suggestions/demands
	Article trigger
	Source of tone

This is especially true as the codebook contains two kinds of variables: Ones which measure certain concepts of coverage patterns directly via the assessment or interpretation of the coders, and others which measure concepts of coverage patterns indirectly by deducing them from the (combined) presence of one or several concrete coverage indicators. With view on the complexity and subtlety of some of the concepts we aimed to capture, we employed some variables which required the direct interpretation of a coverage phenomenon by the coders, who had to indicate the intensity of its presence in the article, for example with regard to the

separation of news and opinion taking place, or the use of frames. The presence of strategic reporting is thus directly measured by the coding of strategy frames present, which again demands a very good grasp of the language and historical as well as cultural context of each article from the coders. Other concepts, on the other hand, we measured using a combination of various indicators - for example can the use of experts as sources as well as the presence of elite sources be an indirect indicator for the presence of instrumental objectivity. Some concepts we also recorded with the help of both types of variables. This complexity of the codebook also means that at times we might dissect a cluster of indicators measuring a certain pattern of coverage (like simplification) and take a look at some individual indicators separately (like sensationalism), if this furthers our analysis and understanding of the respective coverage. Furthermore, there are three dichotomous concepts of which some can be measured by more than one different variable, but which we view and define as opposite scales on the same level and thus as closely linked - these are the following: Objectivity vs. opinion, partisanship vs. neutrality, and conflict- vs. consensus-focus. These concepts are especially interesting as we might expect the same type of logic (i.e. professional logic) to impact the same scale in all countries, but possibly cause it to deflect in opposite directions.

We conclude this overview with some remarks regarding the measuring of variables: For easier practical application, the codebook was divided into four parts: (1) formal aspects, (2) content, (3) style and (4) frames. Under formal aspects, we measured if an article was an agency or a journalist`s piece, the length of an article in words, the size of the article as well as the size of all accompanying images as percentage in relation to the size of the full page (in cm2), the prominence of the article as well as its continuation in any of the newspaper`s books, and the number of infoboxes - separated boxes with additional information regarding the article`s topic, like graphics, statistics, or text, without the presence of an additional headline or author - present. Here, we also assessed the type of the article on a gradient scale of journalistic voice present: From news, background stories, analytical piece and mix of news and opinion towards a clear opinion piece. We also recorded the level of implicit commentary present in addition to the type or genre of the full article, and assessed if the coverage focused more on a specific event or on general analysis. The variable measuring the event- vs. analysis-focus of an article by examining its content for clues pointing to contextual

aspects of an event with regard to its cause, its environment, its history and groups of people involved was later condensed into an index of analysis-focus for better readability. Regarding the content of articles, we recorded locations, topics, sources and quotes present in each article - additional to the number of quotes which were coded for the overall article we also measured the length of quotes present in any article (different than Wilke & Reinemann 2001, however, we counted words instead of lines to account for very short quotes, too) and also recorded for any given source if it was an expert or not. Moreover, we assessed different types of sources more closely, specifically the dichotomy between elite and non-elite sources, which is based on theoretical explications by Imhof & Eisenegger (1999) as well as a study by Tenscher (2008). Furthermore, we measured the presence of dialog by examining the interlacement and mutual reference of the perspectives reported on. The presence of journalistic demands or suggestions was coded, and we assessed if an article seemed to be triggered by causes internal or external to the editorial office and the level of genuineness the central event reported on possessed. These variables accumulated to provide an image of the journalistic initiative involved in every article. The evaluation of parties and the presence of individuals vs. institutions (including parties) was also coded, and if an individual politician was present, it was coded if he/she was presented in a political or private context, to assess the level of personalization present. We additionally recorded if any references to media or PR were present in any article, pointing towards instances of metacoverage. With regard to the style of each article, we decided to code for the tenor or tone of an article instead of the positive or negative value of the issue reported on, to prevent false interpretations of unknown events and to focus on the journalistic tenor given instead of the selection of events. However, the source of the tone could be coded not just as the journalist, but also as stemming from the quotes within an article - this provided us with an additional assessment of journalistic initiative on the other hand, and possibly instrumental objectivity on the other. Regarding article style, we also recorded if an article was written neutrally or colloquially, and if it included narratives of parties or persons concerned by the reported event, which indicates a discursive style focused on inclusion and life-experiences of “normal people“. Finally, several of the theoretical concepts listed above were analyzed through the assessment of frames present within the coverage, namely the strength of a strategic focus, the presence of sensationalism, the presence of scandalization, conflict and emotionality, as well as the orientation towards competence vs. incompetence (mostly of the government) and the

inclusion or exclusion of thematic (i.e. contextual) instead of solely episodic, information. For most frames we chose an assessment on three levels (headline, first paragraph, rest of the article) suggested by Cappella & Jamieson (1997) to facilitate coding. The five variables derived from Tuchman`s (1978) "web of facticity" completed the codebook; their presence in an article was measured by simple dichotomy, and the five variables were later treated as dummy variables in the data analysis to form an index of instrumental objectivity (1-5). Similarly, as mentioned earlier, we treated the four dichotomies forming the variable „event- vs. analysis-based coverage" (does the article give indicators why something happened, does the article give indicators to a larger context, does the article indicate social, demographical or statistical groups, does the article refer to past or future events or situations) as dummy variables for creating an index of analytical coverage, going from 1 to 4. Table 8 gives an overview of all operationalizations and thus presents an extension of the structure of influences, coverage logics and coverage patterns introduced in table 3. It is important to note, however, that this overview only contains the dominant conceptual combinations of variables deducted from the previous theoretical explications. Other, additional combinations cannot be excluded and will, if relevant, be addressed in the presentation of results. More specifics for all variables can be found in the codebook, which is included in the appendix.

Table 8

Indicators of Political Press Coverage Patterns

Coverage logic	Coverage pattern	Indicators/variable values
Professional logic	Objectivity/ opinionated coverage	Av. no. of quotes (high) Av. no. of sources (high) Diversity of perspectives (FAC) Av. length of quotes (long) No implicit comments Article tone not originating from journalist Expert sources Separation between news & opinion / Opinion pieces Implicit comments Article tone originating from journalist Suggestions No separation between news & opinion
	Partisan/neutral coverage	Ocurrence of party mentions
	Metacoverage	References to media or PR
	Analytical coverage	Genuine events as object of article Thematic frame Context frame Variety of perspectives Strategy frame Conflict frame Analysis pieces Article tone originating from journalist Metacoverage
	Journalistic initiative	Article initiated by journalist Suggestions Article tone originating from journalist Implicit comments
	Diversity	Diversity of perspectives Presence of narratives No. of sources (high)

Coverage logic	Coverage pattern	Indicators/variable values
Commercial logic	Simplification	Short length of article No. of visualizations (high) Size of visualizations (large) Presence of infoboxes Sensationalism frame Presence of emotionality Colloquial style Presence of narratives Episodic frames Focus on events
	Personalization	Individual in headline Politician as private person
	Negativism	Negative tone Incompetence frame Conflict frame Negative implicit commentary Scandalization frame
	Objectivity/ opinionated coverage	see above
	Partisan/neutral coverage	see above
	National focus	Own country as focus of coverage
Political logic	Personalization	see above
	Negativism	see above
	Partisan/neutral coverage	see above
	Staged events	Staged event as object of article
Media logic	Negativism	see above
	Journalistic initiative	see above
	Analytical coverage	see above
	Objectivity/ opinionated coverage	see above
	Partisan/neutral coverage	see above
Quality standards	Diversity	see above

Coverage logic	Coverage pattern	Indicators/variable values
	Negativism	see above
	Journalistic initiative	see above
	Elite sources	No. of elite sources (high)
	Inclusion	No. of non-elite sources (high) Presence of dialog Diversity of perspectives
National logic	Objectivity	Av. no. of quotes (high) Av. no. of sources (high) Diversity of perspectives (FAC) Av. length of quotes (long) No implicit comments Article tone not originating from journalist Expert sources Separation between news & opinion
	International focus	Foreign countries as focus in coverage
	Government relation	Length of quotes Staged events Suggestions
Regional logic	Diversity	see above
	Simplification	see above
	National focus	Own country as focus of coverage
Subjective perception & behavior	Negativism	see above
	Journalistic initiative	see above
	Analytical coverage	see above
	Objectivity/ opinionated coverage	see above

Note. Dichotomous coverage patterns (as for example objectivity vs. opinionated coverage) are presented equally if the concept/coverage logic could possibly lead to both values

Coding

The material was coded by one of the main researchers as well as several trained coders. All coders had detailed knowledge of the country whose newspaper articles they analyzed and were fluent in German and English. After a pretest and some amendments to unclear or otherwise not correctly working variables, there were several weeks of coder training for each group coding the coverage of one country. Training included detailed analysis of individual articles and discussion of cultural references as wells as concepts like implicit commentary or mix between news and opinion. Intercoder reliability was calculated for both the English-speaking and the German-speaking groups based on coding of ca. 40 articles (see Rössler 2005), and Cohen`s Kappa ranked between .57 and 1 across all non-formal variables and reached an average of .8 for the German-language and .74 for the English-language reliability test. Since Cohen`s Kappa is a stricter measure than Holsti as it includes the probability of coincidental agreements, these values can be accepted as sufficient, especially with regard to the rather long and complex codebook which also demanded some individual evaluations of articles on the side of the coders.

Results

In the following chapter, we present the empirical results of a content analysis of 8 newspapers from a total of four different Western democracies during the years 1960 until 2007. We will first take a look at the national and organizational features of political press coverage in the different countries individually and, based on their classification into the Democratic Corporatist and Liberal Model, in cross-country comparison, will in a second step analyze the longitudinal effects of mediatization and cross-national phenomena on the coverage patterns found, and will finally provide an assessment of the democratic standards applicable to each models or country`s coverage. By this approach, we aim to first create an understanding of the unique national nature of political press coverage as foundation, on which following the analysis of the role of mediatization and transnational processes of convergence as well as the assessment of different democratic understandings in comparison between all four individual national environments can take place.

Recapitulating the research questions and hypotheses listed in the previous chapter, we can group the findings into four larger areas of analysis:

(1) Cross-country comparison: Impact of macro-level systemic national factors on political press coverage

RQ1: How does press coverage differ among countries?

H1: Political media coverage in the US and Great Britain (i.e. in the countries of the Liberal Model) displays stronger characteristics of personalization, strategy frames, negativism, conflict-focus and a generally pragmatic approach to political reporting than coverage in the Democratic Corporatist Model.

H1a: Coverage in the US is characterized by ethnocentrism, personalization, strategic reporting, objectivity, a variety of perspectives, reporting on staged events, media self-references, and increasing partisanship. There is little interpretive or opinionated coverage.

H1b: Coverage in Great Britain is characterized by criticism towards the government, a focus on conflict, negativism, journalistic initiative, increasing personalization, increasing integration of expert sources, and heavy but declining partisanship. There is little interpretive or opinionated coverage as well as little objectivity.

H2: Political media coverage in Germany and Switzerland (i.e. in the countries of the Democratic Corporatist Model) shows less conflict, less negativism, less personalization, little to no criticism of the government or governing, less strategic framing, a greater reliance on established sources and a generally sacerdotal approach to political reporting.

H2a: Coverage in Germany is characterized by the integration of elite sources, interpretive and opinionated reporting, issue coverage, high but declining partisanship, and increasing objectivity. There is little personalization, sensationalism and criticism towards the government or negativism.

H2b: Coverage in Switzerland is characterized by dialog, a focus on consensus, issue coverage, an integration of citizens` perspective and suggestions or demands towards the governing, a reliance on various sources but domination of elite sources, partisanship, interpretive and opinionated reporting and a general dominance of political logic. There is little criticism towards the governing, little negativism and little personalization.

(2) Impact of meso-level organizational factors on political press coverage

RQ2: How does press coverage differ between newspaper types?

H3: Political coverage in national newspapers is more in-depth and provides more contextual information and less personalization.

H4: Political coverage in regional newspapers displays a higher level of commercial logic, a more sacerdotal approach to politics and a greater proximity to the audience than political coverage in national newspapers.

(3) Longitudinal and cross-country comparison: Assessment of macro-level, transnational processes of convergence as influence on national political press coverage

RQ3: How does press coverage over time differ between countries and which transnational processes are visible over time?

H5: Adaption processes and fusion of various coverage characteristics (i.e. hybridization) are more common than unilinear adoption processes like Americanization.

RQ3a: To which extent is coverage in the different countries governed by media and/or commercial logic?

H6: Media and commercial logic have grown stronger over time in all four countries. This means that characteristics like simplification, polarization, conflict, personalization, negativism and sensationalism as well as analysis and objectivity have increased in press coverage over time.

H7: Media and commercial logic are most dominant in the US coverage, dominant in British coverage, less dominant in German coverage and least dominant in Swiss coverage.

H8: Criticism towards the governing, personalization and strategic reporting will be highest in US coverage as they are facilitated by the political context.

H9: Criticism towards the governing will be low in German and Swiss coverage, as a sacerdotal approach to political coverage can be expected while a pragmatic approach is predominant in Great Britain and the US.

RQ4: To which factors do differences among the analyzed political press coverage correspond the closest: Organizational differences between types of newspapers, systemic differences on the national level or transnational dynamics across countries and over time?

(4) Longitudinal and cross-country comparison: Assessing standards of democratic quality as influence on political press coverage

RQ5: What standards of democratic news coverage can be distinguished across countries?

H10: Based on the findings of Ferree et al. and on the characteristics of political communication culture in each country, German and Swiss political affairs coverage is likely

to tend towards elite democratic standards, while British and American political affairs coverage can be expected to tend towards more participatory standards.

Regarding the hypotheses, the notion of discursive opportunity structures provides a framework based on which an interpretation of differences found is possible. However, the fact remains that the same characteristics of press coverage can be traced back to several possible causes, and the decision to view one cause as more relevant than another remains a theoretical one, at least within the realm of the present research. Criticism towards the governing, for instance, could be rooted in a conception of journalists as political commentators, or in an aggressive stance adopted by the press to vie for readers (i.e. commercialism). While some discerning of factors can be done by introducing a longitudinal comparison, based on for example the fact that commercialism can be expected to have developed and increased over time, this is not always a definite indicator as actual proof of when and where commercial orientation began or grew in importance is scarce and largely theoretical (one indicator can be found in Hallin & Mancini`s dimension of the development of the mass press, which we use as theoretical base for our examination of commercialization). Thus, in a study like this which covers a large scale of contexts and time, the ascription of press coverage characteristics to specific influences has to remain largely theoretically based, and the decision which factor might be decisive for any characteristic is dependent on the knowledge and interpretation of the different contexts of time and location. No final causal inferences regarding the level-factors and the actual character of political press coverage can be made based on the data available in this study; rather, an impression can be given of the possible interrelations between contextual factors and media content, so that future comparative studies of political communication have a foundation to draw upon and a starting point to delve deeper into the individual connections defining comparative political communication research. We begin with a short overview over the sample.

Overall Sample Characteristics

Overall, 2769 articles were analyzed, 1095 from German newspapers, 603 from Swiss newspapers, 688 from American newspapers and 383 from British newspapers.

Table 9

Sample Composition: Newspaper Types

		Articles	Total
National newspapers	Germany		564
	Switzerland		356
	USA		373
	Great Britain		249
Regional newspapers	Germany		531
	Switzerland		247
	USA		315
	Great Britain		134
	Total		2769

Table 10

Sample Composition: Years

Year	No. of articles
1960	644
1961	703
2006	597
2007	825
Total	2769

The majority of articles in all countries were prominently placed (i.e. on the title page), about one third of all articles was placed less prominent, being only teased or referenced on the title page but printed inside the paper (see table 11).

Table 11

Sample Prominence

	Articles		
	prominent	not prominent	Total
Germany	768	327	1095
Switzerland	312	278	590
USA	545	143	688
Great Britain	219	164	383
Total	1844	912	2756

n = 2756

Articles consisted of 483 words on average (the shortest was 12, the longest 6102 words long) and included an average of three sources, the majority of them clearly specified. The majority of articles were background reports (36.2%) or factual news (31.1%) and concentrated on events taking place in or concerning the respective newspaper`s country of origin (56.2%). Attention to national politics was thus slightly higher than attention to international politics, which is mirrored in the topics most reported on - these were the respective country`s government (10% of articles concerning individual members of government, 8.5% regarding the collective government), diplomacy in general (10.2%) and military/security issues (9.2%). The majority of articles were authored by journalists, less articles were adopted from a news agency. The Swiss papers relied most strongly on news agency input, while news agency articles were almost inexistent in the British newspapers. In the American papers, a relatively high number of articles which mixed agency information and journalistic editing could be found (see table 12). Agency reports and mixed articles occurred significantly more often in regional newspapers.

Table 12

Article Authorship

	Article author		
	Journalist	**News agency**	**Mixed**
Germany	76%	23%	2%
Switzerland	67%	30%	4%
USA	66%	24%	11%
Great Britain	98%	2%	0%
Average	73%	23%	4%

n=2769

Comparison Across Countries

The Democratic Corporatist vs. the Liberal Model. First, our hypotheses regarding Hallin & Mancini`s typology are tested as they provide the most abstract level of comparison between countries. The hypotheses were:
H1: Political media coverage in the US and Great Britain (i.e. in the countries of the Liberal Model) is characterized by personalization, strategy frames, negativism and conflict-focus.
H2: Political media coverage in Germany and Switzerland (i.e. in the countries of the Democratic Corporatist Model) shows less conflict, less negativism, less personalization, little to no criticism of the government or governing, less strategic framing, and a greater reliance on established sources.

Both hypotheses were tested using cross-tabulations and t-tests contrasting the values of individual variables between the two groups of countries. Regarding the four countries analyzed in this study, the expectations were that political press coverage in the US and in Great Britain would be characterized by personalization, strategy frames, negativism, conflict-focus and a generally pragmatic approach to political reporting, while German and Swiss political press coverage was expected to show less conflict, less negativism, less personalization, less strategy frames, little to no criticism of the governing, a greater reliance on established sources and a generally sacerdotal approach to political reporting. These assumptions can be traced back to a large part to Hallin & Mancini`s typology of systems of media and politics, which locate Great Britain and America within the Liberal Model, whereas Germany and Switzerland are placed in the Democratic Corporatist Model. Both models are expected to differ systematically due to structural differences on the macro- and meso-level. A majority of the expected differences was evident in the data. It has to be noted that as the sample is comparatively large, most analyses yielded results which were highly significant. Thus, measures of effect size will mostly be taken as a starting point for interpretation and the significance of differences can be assumed if not stated otherwise.

Two of the most prominent differences between the press coverage in the Democratic Corporatist countries and the press coverage in the Liberal countries are the length and location of articles as well as the number of sources and quotes. Articles in the Liberal

Model[83] are significantly longer and tend to be continued in the domestic policy section, while more than 50% of articles in the Democratic Corporatist model are limited to the title page. The average number of sources in an article of the Liberal Model is higher (t=16.711), as is the quantity of quotes, which reaches an average of only 2.12 in the Democratic Corporatist coverage but averages 5.41 in the coverage of the Liberal model (t=18.169). This high frequency of external input in articles of the Liberal model fits with Hallin & Mancini`s assumption of a more dominant prevalence of an objectivity norm in the Liberal Model – the integration of outside sources and external statements are both strategies which can be used to deflect any opinion contained in the articles away from the journalist and thus creates an appearance of objectivity (Tuchman 1978). This is in line with the slightly (but significantly) higher ranking of the Liberal Model`s coverage on the objectivity-index (t=5.961) and the opposite characteristic of prevalence of opinionated coverage in the Democratic Corporatist Model (see table 13). However, we expect the strong influence of the journalistic norm of objectivity in the US to be visible not only in the confrontation of the two models, but also in the comparison of British and American political coverage; i.e. we expect that the higher objectivity in the Liberal Model is based mainly on journalistic norms based in US journalism. Thus, and since no further signs of a much higher degree of objectivity in the Liberal than in the Democratic Corporatist Model emerged in a first empirical comparison, we will address the occurrence of these variables again in more detail when discussing H1a. We will proceed similarly with the significantly higher occurrence of dialog in coverage of the Liberal Model, which while one of the most prominent between the two models (i.e. a difference with a large effect size) cannot be explicitly traced back to Hallin & Mancini`s framework but rather provides a link to democratic standards and will thus be discussed under RQ3.

Closely related to the typology of the Democratic Corporatist and the Liberal Model are indicators of personalization, negativism and strategic coverage, which are more dominant in

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[83] As effects of differences are more and higher in comparison of the two models than in comparison of the individual countries or newspapers (see following chapters) and the existence of the models is thus somewhat consolidated, the US and Great Britain will for the purposes of this part of the analysis be called the Liberal Model, and Germany and Switzerland will be called the Democratic Corporatist Model.

the Liberal Model, and interpretive and opinionated coverage as well as partisan reporting, which are more prominent in Democratic Corporatist coverage. In table 13, we list the most prominent differences between the two models` coverage, for which we mostly refer to bundles of variables forming multidimensional patterns of coverage, like negative tone, incompetence frames and conflict frames all indicating negativism. However, in this as well as in future tables we may list individual variables if they seem especially relevant regarding the questions examined or comparisons made. In this case, this refers to the variable of strategy frames, which we usually subsume under the pattern of analytic coverage. But in this case, it were especially the strategy frames whose frequency in the two types of coverage stood out from the complete bundle of variables denoting analytical coverage; thus, we listed this variable individually. It were specifically this variable of strategy frames, as well as the variable of conflict frames and the variable of criticism present which frequently stood out individually, and which may hence be listed individually in some tables, without explicit relation to a larger coverage pattern.

Table 13

Prominent Differences between the Liberal and Democratic Corporatist Model

Coverage Patterns	**Variable**	**Dem.-Corp. Model**	**Liberal Model**	**Cramer-V**	**p**
Opinionated coverage	Opinion pieces	12.2%	2%	.331	.000
	Implicit comments	53.6%	44%	.279	.000
	Article tone originating from journalist	45.4%	18.2%	.295	.000
	Suggestions	94.4%	56.1%	.552	.000
Partisan coverage	Occurrence of party mentions	33.4%	30.8%	-	-
Personalization	Individual in headline	38.2%	66.9%	.342	.000
	Politician as private person	2.7%	7.3%	.109	.000
Negativism	Negative tone	21.8%	43%	.258	.000
	Incompetence frame	33.6%	45.1%	.186	.000
	Conflict frame	33.3%	55.3%	.233	.000
Elite sources		85%	80%	14.587[a]	.000
Strategic coverage	Clear strategy frames	10.4%	12.4%	.051	.029

n=2769 [a)] t

Personalization in the form of individual politicians mentioned in the headline of an article exhibits one of the largest effect sizes in the sample. Personalized headlines are much more likely to appear in political coverage in the Liberal Model than in Democratic Corporatist coverage. The same assumption, just somewhat weaker, is true for the integration of politicians as private citizens instead of political office-holders. Considering the high relevance of the US President as singular and powerful head of state as well as the increasing importance of the Prime Minister in Britain, the conditions of the political macro-level in the Liberal Model are in line with these findings. Additionally, the expected higher level of mediatization as well as commercialization (which both involve personalization as one of their most prominent consequences) in countries belonging to the Liberal Model also corresponds with these results. The significantly higher percentage of clear strategy frames in the Liberal Model also fits with expectations of mediatization. A closer look at the data shows that the number of strategy frames is even higher in the US coverage than in the British coverage, which adds macro-level factors as probable influence as persuasion can be seen as an inherent part of the political process in the US. However, consideration needs to be paid to the fact that the majority of articles in both models (56.9% in the Democratic Corporatist and 51.9% in the Liberal Model) do not include strategy frames at all. This indicates that the prevalence of strategic or horse-race coverage often found in analyses of election coverage in various countries cannot be verified for regular political coverage. The often-voiced suspicion of a dominance of strategy over political substance does thus not find much support in these first figures. However, longitudinal analysis of the data might yield some more explicit results regarding the suspected rise of strategic coverage over time. With regard to negativism in political press coverage, the assumptions that Hallin and Mancini posit based on macro-level factors like little state regulation and high relevance of media freedom are supported by the data: Coverage in the Liberal Model is more negative than in the Democratic Corporatist Model, as evidenced by the more frequent occurrence of the following variables in the US and British articles: Negative tone, focus on incompetence of politicians and focus on conflict. These findings are also in line with a political communication culture based on large distance between media and politics and a dominance of media logic, as Pfetsch (2004) suggested for the US and as Blumler and Gurevitch`s (1975) “pragmatic approach to political communication” implies, as well as with the expectation of a higher degree of mediatization in the Liberal than in the Democratic Corporatist Model.

While personalization, strategic coverage and negativism are thus all present to a higher degree in the political coverage of the Liberal Model, opinionated coverage and partisan reporting are, as presumed by Hallin & Mancini`s framework, more dominant in the political press coverage of the Democratic Corporatist Model. Opinionated coverage, visible through article tone evidently coming from the journalist himself, through the inclusion of explicit suggestions or demands posed towards the governing, or through implicit comments throughout the article, is expected in the Democratic Corporatist Model due to its countries history of journalists as political actors and active commentators. This macro-level influence is thus still visible today on the meso- and micro-level: Interpreter and commentator of political news is still a highly relevant journalistic role conception, and the relevance of the objectivity norm is much lower than in the Anglo-Saxon countries. Interestingly, however, the implicit commentary present in the Democratic Corporatist coverage brings with it a certain degree of negativity, as only 8.1% of the comments are of a positive nature. This could be seen as a subtle sign of "Americanization", as the US displays the most negative coverage across all countries, or as an indicator of a "hybridization" of political press coverage with the negative tone often prevalent in US news coverage to a certain extent integrated into the tradition of subjective, interpretive reporting and commenting. Regarding partisan press coverage, we can say that there is only a small amount of party mentions in both the Democratic Corporatist and the Liberal Model, and that the party mentions in the Democratic Corporatist Model mainly occurred in Germany while the mentions of parties in the Liberal Model were found mainly in the US coverage. Evaluations of the parties were positive in all countries (an average of 1 in the Democratic Corporatist and of 1.01 in the Liberal Model on the party evaluation index ranging from 1 to 4, 1 being positive), which points towards a partisanship shown by affiliation rather than by attacking the respective antagonistic party. The long history and still strong role of political parties in the political process explain the higher number of party occurrences in the coverage in line with Hallin & Mancini`s explications, but one detail provides some interesting insight: In both the US and the German coverage, it was mainly two parties (next to foreign parties which were mentioned in 6.2% of Democratic Corporatist and 4.7% of Liberal articles, corresponding with the greater ethnocentrism expected from the US) that received mentions. In the US, this can be expected as America is a de-facto two-party system consisting of the Republicans and the Democrats

(which received a mention in 10% and 5.7% of articles respectively). Germany, however, is a multiparty democracy and press coverage could therefore be expected to cover more than just the two biggest so-called people`s parties, CDU/CSU and SPD (with receive mentions in 9.4% and 4.9% of articles respectively). Several different explanations are possible: First, especially since the conservative CDU/CSU receives significantly more coverage than the socialist SPD, tendencies of the two analyzed newspapers could be suspected. We will discuss this assumption in more detail in a later chapter. Second, in line with some other observations, this finding could be a sign of "Americanization", with German political communication adopting the two-main-parties focus already common in the US. Third, the result could maybe at least partly traced back to aspects of political communication culture and democratic news standards, with a close proximity between media and politics and a sacerdotal approach to political communication coupled with elements of elite democratic conceptions causing a strong emphasis on only the governing parties, which were, at the time under examination, the CDU/CSU and the SPD. It is at this point important to note that in Germany the government consisted of only the CDU/CSU in 1960 and 1961, with three members of the FDP joining in late 1961, and of a coalition between CDU/CSU and SPD with a CDU chancellor at its head in 2006 and 2007. This combination of parties parallels the combination found in press coverage during these two years. This explanation rings especially true when taken together with the overwhelmingly positive party evaluations found in the data[84] and the fact that elite sources where significantly more frequent in the Democratic Corporatist coverage than in the liberal coverage. However, data analysis showed that party evaluations were few and largely positive across all countries and years. Therefore, this variable was not included in the following analyses as it has the character of a constant.

To sum up, personalization is as expected higher in the Liberal Model, as is strategic coverage (indicated by the use of strategy frames) which, however, is generally rare. Negativism is also more dominant in the Liberal Model, but the data does not exclude some transnational dynamics at play, as negativism could also be found in the coverage of the Democratic Corporatist Model, which was not necessarily expected. The same is true, in a slightly

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[84] Data analysis showed that party evaluations were few and largely positive across all countries and years. Therefore, this variable will not be included in the following analyses as it has the character of a constant.

different way, for partisan coverage: As expected it is higher in the Democratic Corporatist model, however the general amount of party mentions is generally low especially in Britain and Switzerland, and mostly limited to the most powerful parties.[85] Opinionated coverage on the other hand occurs more frequently in the Democratic Corporatist Model, which was predicted by the typology. The one peculiar fact about this finding, however, is that while implicit comments and opinion-pieces indeed occur in more cases in Germany and Switzerland, the countries of the Liberal Model rate lower regarding the variable of separation between news and opinion. We will take this curiosity up again at a later point. Our expectations of less criticism and a higher number of elite sources in the press coverage of the Democratic Corporatist Model were also supported. Hypotheses H1 and H2 can thus be confirmed.

The individual countries in comparison. After having confirmed our hypotheses on differences between countries on the level of abstract models of political and media systems, we now address the countries` differences one level below, on the national dimension within the Liberal and Democratic Corporatist Model. Regarding Great Britain and the US, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1a: Coverage in the US is characterized by ethnocentrism, personalization, strategic reporting, objectivity, a variety of perspectives, reporting on staged events, media self-references, increasing partisanship, a distance between media and politics and a general dominance of media logic. There is little interpretive or opinionated coverage.

H1b: Coverage in Great Britain is characterized by criticism towards the government, a focus on conflict, negativism, journalistic initiative, increasing personalization, increasing integration of expert sources, and heavy but declining partisanship. There is little interpretive or opinionated coverage as well as little objectivity.

Both hypotheses were tested using cross-tabulations and t-tests contrasting the values of individual variables between the two countries. The most prominent differences that could be

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[85] It has to be said that the instrument only allowed coding for a party mention if the party was directly and by name (or abbreviation) referred to in the article. This of course excludes a level of partisan reporting which is based on more implicit evidence and country-specific knowledge about the individual parties.

found between the two English-speaking countries were the following: American articles tended to be longer and continued within the newspaper, while English articles often ended on the title page (this puts Great Britain more in line with the coverage yet analyzed in the Democratic Corporatist Model). Furthermore, the number of sources and especially the number of established sources is higher in the US coverage, one reason of which can possibly be seen in the fact that sources are used to supply the tenor for articles in the American papers analyzed. In British coverage, on the other hand, tenor is more often provided by the journalists themselves. This finding already supports part of H1b, but a further look at the data provides additional significant differences corresponding with our expectations. Table 14 lists these differences, again mostly corresponding to multidimensional coverage patterns. However, as mentioned before, there are cases in which single variables stand out in a specific national context which cannot be easily subsumed under or interpreted as belonging to one specific coverage pattern. In this case, we are referring to the use of expert sources, which is higher in the US coverage, and which one the one hand points towards patterns of objectivity that are also more frequent in the US, but can on the other hand also pertain to democratic quality standards (with the elite paradigm assigning high importance to expert sources) and diversity, if coupled with more additional source types. For this reason, we included the frequency of expert sources, which was one of the most significant differences between the two countries of the Liberal Model, as individual variable in the following table.

Table 14

Differences within the Liberal Model: USA vs. Britain

Coverage pattern	Variable	USA	Britain	Cramer-V	p
Objectivity	Objectivity-index	3.6	3.55[b]	.818[a]	.413
Opinionated coverage	Opinion pieces	4.7%	.4%	.385	.000
	Implicit comments	64.7%	44.4%	.225	.000
	Article tone originating from journalist	11.8%	36%	.395	.000
	Suggestions	67.8%	35.2%	.327	.000
Partisan coverage	Occurrence of party mentions	25%	41.3%		
Metacoverage	References to media or PR	30.1%	24.1%	.142	.000
Journalistic initiative	Articles initiated by journalist	12.7%	15%	.031	.310
	Suggestions	67.8%	35.2%	.327	.000
Diversity	Average no. of sources				
	More than one perspective present	61.3%	42.1%	.185	.000
Personalization	Individual in headline	77.8%	47.1%	.325	.000
	Politician as private person	9.3%	3.7%	.105	.001
Negativism	Negative tone	46.5%	36.8%	.212	.000
	Incompetence frame	47%	40.9%	.084	.076
	Conflict frame	51.8%	62.5%	.145	.000
Ethnocentrism (national focus)	Own country as focus of coverage	69.7%	57.6%	.234	.000
Staged events	Staged event as object of article	7.6%	16%	.266	.000
Strategic coverage	Strategy frames (clear and medium)	60.3%	26.2%	.357	.000
Expert sources		1%	.8%	.012	.703

n=1071 [a)] t [b)] Scale from 0-5 increasing in objectivity

As expected, US political coverage was more ethnocentric than coverage in Great Britain - almost 70% of all articles had North America as main location (followed by articles including also the rest of America). This can presumably be traced back to the integration of domestic and foreign policy in US politics (namely in the office of the president) and the unique

standing the US has as world power with great political and economic influence. Britain, on the other hand, is much smaller and possesses less political, economic and military power, which provides less legitimacy for limiting political press coverage to mainly British issues. Interestingly, however, it ranks behind Germany (60.3 vs. 57.6% respectively) in national coverage despite its remote location in Europe and despite its distancing from the EU which could be expected to foster a stronger national focus. This is an indicator for Germany`s leading political position on European territory which lends heightened legitimacy to a strong focus on national going-ons and less coverage of non-German events. Two more characteristics, which were more distinctive in the US coverage, were, as predicted, personalization and strategic coverage. Both factors could be ascribed to a high degree of mediatization in the US (a connection we will address at a later point) as they constitute classic features of media logic. But the data shows a clear distinction between a personalization in terms of a focus on individual political actors, which can be observed in a larger number of articles both in the United States and in Great Britain, and a personalization which also emphasizes the private life of a political actor, which can be found only to a very small extent in both countries. While both types of personalization can be linked to media or commercial logic, the latter is certainly more often and strongly connected to these types of logic and their assumed negative effects on democracy as it moves the attention away from political substance and towards human drama. The former type of personalization (maybe better circumscribed as "individualization") though can also be linked to several structural characteristics of the political system and communication culture of the US, thereby removing it from the assumption of growing media and economic influence and explaining it by systemic features inherent in the American political system and communication culture: First, North America`s presidential democracy puts a strong focus on the presidential office which is occupied by one individual. Together with the weak status of political parties, this creates ideal conditions for personalized political press coverage in causing high visibility, legitimacy and resonance of one political individual in particular and higher visibility of as well as resonance to individual political actors in general than political organizations or institutions (like parties). It will be interesting to observe in the years to come if the process of party-building which seems to be taking place in the US and which is also indicated by the increase of partisan reporting found in the data will proof a counter-influence to political personalization. Second, the structural conditions of the American presidential democracy

integrate persuasion as legitimate and frequent political behavior: Political decisions and programs are often dependent on the president receiving the support of a majority, which, due to the lack of political parties as organizing institutions, is again dependent on the persuasive power of the president towards other political actors. This causes a high visibility and resonance of persuasive behavior and lends legitimacy to the medias` coverage of strategic issues like “who will win”.

There are three more features, which differentiate American political press coverage from its British counterpart, and which can all be related to the presence of some kind of professionalism. These are a higher number of media self-references, a higher variety of perspectives and a higher degree of objectivity. The first could be linked to professionalism within politics: A high professionalism in politics causes competent behavior towards the media, meaning that there is a higher possibility of political instrumentalization of the media. Political actors adept at handling the media can use press coverage for their purposes. Once the media realize this, it can lead to a dissonance between the media`s own self-image (as actor autonomous from politics) and media coverage caused by political instrumentalization. This, in turn, will then lead to self-referential media coverage – media outlets criticizing themselves or other media as having been too credulous towards politics. A similar process, also leading to self-referential reporting might be expected to result from the clash between commercialization and the specifically American standard of objectivity in journalism: Obviously commercially oriented media coverage for example might subsequently result in media criticism voiced by the media. And this leads to the second aspect of professionalism of importance here: Journalistic professionalism. Especially in the US, this concept is almost identical with the notion of journalistic objectivity, explaining the slightly higher location on the index of instrumental objectivity of US coverage. The high relevance attributed to objectivity can also be presumed to impact the number of sources and the variety of perspectives presented in any article; it shields the journalist from accusations of partial or subjective reporting by giving the impression of accounting for all possible viewpoints of an issue and by assigning possible judgments or evaluative tenor to the sources cited. Thus, these findings are also in line with Tuchman`s (1978) assumptions regarding the strategic realization of objectivity standards in US journalism. So is one more result of our data analysis, even though on first sight it seems to contradict our anticipations: While we find the

least amount of opinion pieces in US coverage, the amount of implicit comments within the political coverage is surprisingly high – despite the assumed and largely confirmed prevalence of the objectivity standard. But this conundrum becomes clear when applying Tuchman`s argument of the often purely strategic application of objectivity. In this light, the integration of implicit commentary into articles provides a way for the journalist to include her view of an issue or situation without disregarding the expectations of objectivity. In other words, the more illicit the open expression of opinion becomes for a journalist, the more it can be expected to crop up implicitly, with the appearance of objective reporting preserved. This is not to say that US journalists turn to suggestive writing as the only way to escape otherwise oppressive objectivity standards, nor does it imply an even conscious decision on the side of the journalist to integrate implicit commentary into her reporting. After all, expressing an explicit political opinion is by no means impossible in the US, nor is the norm of objectivity some top-down implemented rule that media actors do not believe in. On the contrary, much implicit commentary can even be expected to be unintended and spring from the character and usage of language rather than from a conscious decision to integrate subjective views into political reporting. The difference is that subjective or evaluative wording will most likely not stand out in any context in which opinionated reporting is rather common, while seeming outright conspicuous in a context proclaiming objectivity as its foremost professional norm.

With regard to the British political press coverage, as expected we found a higher level of conflict than in the US, a higher level of journalistic initiative, stronger partisanship and somewhat less objectivity. Furthermore, an increase of personalization could be determined in the data. With the exception of lower objectivity, which can be assumed to be mainly due to the fact that the objectivity norm evolved in an US context and still has its strongest foothold there, these findings can be directly linked to several characteristics of the British political system: The strong role ascribed to the opposition and the dynamics between government and opposition in Britain, coupled with the systemic disadvantage (and thus aggressive stance) of smaller parties, creates high visibility of and ascribes a certain level of legitimacy to political conflict, which is mirrored in the political press coverage. A somewhat similar dynamic can be assumed regarding the partisanship evident in the political press coverage: The relevance of political parties, the long-lasting relative programmatic stability of the British de-facto two-party system as well as the traditionally high political parallelism in Great Britain provide

visibility, resonance and legitimacy for partisan reporting. Likewise, the trend towards personalization in British press coverage should not simply be ascribed to commercialization or mediatization[86] but can also be linked to a slow but steady change of the conditions within the British political system: The relevance and political power of the Prime Minister has been growing over the last decades, so that some observers even fear the office could gain a "presidential" character. Accordingly, a focus on the holder of this office in the media is supported by the discursive opportunity structure developing and grows more legitimate and necessary.[87] A higher level of journalistic initiative than in the US, on the other hand, can again be traced back to more traditional political structures and be explained by the assumption of a rather large distance between media and politics (Pfetsch 2004) as well as a generally antagonistic relationship between political and media actors in Britain. However, some other findings support a different view: Contrary to the journalistic initiative for article topics, suggestions are more common in the US. Furthermore, the quotes in British articles are longer than in the US coverage, it includes more reports on staged events and it does not show many indicators of higher negativism than in the US except for the conflict focus. This points towards a higher impact of professional news management on the side of the government, which was initiated under Thatcher and continued and strengthened during Blair`s terms, than expected. It seems that the government is relatively successful in positioning staged events as well as soundbites into the political press coverage, and no backlash in the figure of negative coverage or criticism can be ascertained in the data if we exempt the conflict-focus as based on structural characteristics rather than journalistic initiative. Overall, it seems British political press coverage is more positive than expected and the relationship between media and politics might not be as antagonistic after all (for a comparison across time to test if growing political professionalism in news management has furthered this development see the next subchapter; however as the sample does not include any coverage before 1960, a more extensive analysis would be necessary to fully test this assumption, starting before the Thatcher-years). Regarding opinionated coverage, the British

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[86] The same is true here regarding the different types of personalization as in the US coverage.

[87] As this study only measured personalization in general and did not collect information on the specific individuals on which the personal focus lay, these interpretive assumptions could be tested by a more detailed longitudinal analysis of British political press coverage focusing on the Prime Minister which could not be realized within the scope of the present research.

press analyzed is more open in its integration of opinion than the US press – the amount of opinion pieces is higher than in the US. However, there are less opinion-based articles in the British coverage than in the German or Swiss coverage, which again corroborates the alignment of Great Britain with the Liberal Model. The data did not yield any evidence for an increase in expert sources or a decline in partisanship (no significant correlation between years and the number of expert sources nor any significant differences regarding the number of expert sources in comparison between the 1960s and 2006/07) – it seems that there is a trend rather towards an increase in partisan or at least party coverage, as the number of articles mentioning political parties has also increased in Britain, and even more so than it did in the US coverage, where the increase was somewhat expected. This phenomenon of heightened party relevance will be examined more closely in a time comparison in the next subchapter – one possible explanation could be the possibility of polarization and simplification that the coverage of political parties offers compared to the coverage of numerous individual issues and actors.

In summary, it can be said that structural influences of the political system and communication culture on the macro-level as well as journalistic and political professionalism on the meso-level seem to be most visible in national political press coverage when comparing Great Britain and the US within the Liberal Model. Ethnocentrism, personalization and strategic coverage, more strongly evident in US coverage, might well be rooted in the structures of the political system, media self-references, a variety of perspectives and implicit comments can presumably be traced back, albeit indirectly, to notions of journalistic professionalism and especially the US-centered objectivity norm, whereas in Great Britain, the professionalization of politics is more visible in aspects creating a counterweight to media antagonism and negativity. Personalization in British coverage could also be interpreted as rooted in a change (maybe even "Americanization") of the political rather than the media system, reacting to the changing role of the Prime Minister rather than to an increased relevance of media logic in general. Overall it seems that while both countries fit well into the Liberal Model when compared with the countries of the Democratic Model, Great Britain in certain aspects tends towards the Democratic Corporatist Model, as Hallin & Mancini (2004) already suspected when creating their typology. According to the present analysis, the political system in Britain still strongly influences the discursive opportunity structure. And

while this might be true to a certain extent for the US, too (for example regarding the characteristics of the presidential democracy), the characteristics of the macro-level in the US are to some extent favorable and thus more easily permeable for or rather combinable with media logic, it seems, than they are in the United Kingdom. Referencing back to our hypotheses, H1a can be largely confirmed, with the exception of a higher number of staged events and little opinionated coverage – the number of staged events was higher in the British than in the American coverage, and US coverage, while not exhibiting many opinion pieces, featured numerous implicit comments. H1b was only partly supported by the data: Criticism and conflict were higher in the US coverage than in the United Kingdom, there was no increase (rather, if anything, a slight decrease) in the integration of experts as sources, and partisanship – while highest of all countries – is not declining but rather increasing like in the US. It will be interesting to see if growing partisanship in political press coverage will prove to be an overall trend across all four countries. One explanation for the more accurate predictions regarding US press coverage can be found in the dominance of the US as object of research for theory-building work on political media coverage. As most theoretical concepts concerning political media coverage have been developed and tested using American media coverage, it can be expected that predictions concerning this kind of coverage are made on a much broader supporting base while hypotheses regarding other countries` media coverage often have to be deducted from theoretical assumptions (like Hallin & Mancini`s framework, which also relies on the US as the ideal type of the Liberal Model, whereas all other countries can be assumed to correspond more or less to the developed models) or based on findings in US media coverage. This is one more reason for a systemic extension of comparative research on political communication, as a broader, more inclusive theoretical framework is needed which does not solely rely on the US as a foil for most research. This kind of framework, however, can only be developed by examining international media content comparatively to discern similarities, differences and their causes.

Regarding the press coverage in the two German-speaking countries of the Democratic Corporatist Model, the following two hypotheses were stated:
H2a: Coverage in Germany is characterized by integration of elite sources, interpretive and opinionated reporting, issue coverage, high but declining partisanship, and increasing

objectivity. There is little personalization, sensationalism and criticism towards the government or negativism.
H2b: Coverage in Switzerland is characterized by dialog, a focus on consensus, issue coverage, an integration of citizens` perspective and suggestions or demands towards the governing, a reliance on various sources but domination of elite sources, partisanship, interpretive and opinionated reporting and a general dominance of political logic. There is little criticism towards the governing, little negativism and little personalization.

Both hypotheses were tested using cross-tabulations and t-tests contrasting the values of individual variables between the two groups of countries, and an overview over the findings is presented in table 15. As with previously presented results, there are several individual variables which stand out, in this case these are the presence of strategic frames, a variable whose autonomy we have already seen in previous findings, and the presence of sensationalism frames, which was much higher in German than in Swiss coverage, without further variables referring to the larger pattern of simplification showing similar differences. Furthermore, you will notice three coverage patterns which we encounter for the first time: Attention to politics, consensus and inclusion, which are all three more prominent in Swiss newspapers` political coverage. It is easy to see why these coverage patterns surface specifically during the comparative examination of Swiss political coverage, as they are mirroring prominent characteristics of the Swiss political context.

Table 15

Differences Within the Democratic Corporatist Model: Germany vs. Switzerland

Coverage pattern	Variable	Germany	Switzerland	Effect size	p
Attention to politics	Av. length of articles	354 wrds.	410 wrds.	3.151[b]	.002
	Foreign countries as focus in coverage	39.7%	65.5%	.317[a]	.000
	Thematic frames	45.2%	51.8%	.066[a]	.062
Negativism - Criticism	Incompetence frame	37.7%	26.4%	.170[a]	.000
	Suggestions	91.4%	100%	.180[a]	.000
Objectivity	Objectivity index	3.4	3.2	3.110[b]	.002
	Av. number of quotes	2.41	1.61	5.163[b]	.000
	Av. length of quotes in one article	26.86 wrds.	24.78 wrds.	.626[a]	.531
	Implicit comments	41.9%	100%	.440[a]	.000
Mix of news & opinion	Pieces mixing news & opinion	4.1%	6.5%	.091[a]	.030
	Separation between facts and opinion	96.8%	89%	.155[a]	.000
	Implicit comments	41.9%	100%	.440[a]	.000
Partisan coverage	Occurrence of party mentions	36.8%	27.2%	.118[a]	.000
Journalistic initiative	Article tone originating from journalist	41%	58%	.171[a]	.000
	Articles initiated by journalist	19.7%	23.9%	.050[a]	.040
	Implicit comments	41.9%	100%	.440[a]	.000
	Suggestions	91.4%	100%	.180[a]	.000
Personalization	Individual in headline	42.3%	30.6%	.123[a]	.000
	Politician as private person	3.3%	1.5%	.053[a]	.030
Sensationalism	Sensationalism frame	19.2%	11.1%	.114[a]	.000
Strategic coverage	Strategy frames				
Consensus	Consensus frame	28.6%	29.8%	.143[a]	.000
Inclusion	Clear dialog	4.7%	5.2%	.424[a]	.000
	Av. Number of non-elite sources in article	.15	.21	2.047[b]	.041

Diversity of perspectives[1])	18.4%	26.3%	.117[a]	.000

n=1698 [a)] Cramer-V [b)] t [1]) Several equally weighted perspectives

The data showed that while most of the expectations towards Swiss press coverage were correct our suppositions about German political press coverage were only partly accurate (see table 15). We hypothesized correctly that partisanship in German reporting would be high – the degree of partisanship in the German press is almost as high as it is in the United Kingdom and thus on second place - and that objectivity had increased since the 1960s – German press coverage is on second place behind the US in objectivity in 2006/07. Additionally, the proportion of elite sources is highest in Germany (84.4%, vs. 81.6% in Swiss coverage, Sig.: .000) and the article tone is mainly neutral although is more negative in German than in Swiss coverage (24.1% vs. 17.8% of negative articles respectively, Sig.: . 000). However, our assumptions regarding a low level of sensationalism and criticism in German press coverage were not fulfilled. The level of sensationalism in the German newspapers is second only to the British coverage and thus rather high in overall comparison and incompetence-framing is more common in German coverage than it is in Swiss coverage, indicating a higher level of criticism towards the governing in Germany. In combination with additional findings regarding the German coverage however, a coherent albeit somewhat unexpected picture is formed: Articles are smaller (and shorter) than in Swiss coverage and mostly focus on Germany, there is a higher focus on individual political actors instead of political institutions like in Switzerland, an article`s tone more often comes from the sources than the journalist and there are more and longer quotes. If one takes the facts that article tone is commonly rooted in quotes and that quotes are quite common and lengthy as indicators for strategically objective coverage, and adds the heightened sensationalism and personalization together with the criticism found, it seems that German political press coverage is indeed moving rather close towards US coverage characteristics. Personalization, negativism and the employment of objectivity-strategies are all features visible and expected from American coverage and its combination of political system factors as well as journalistic norms and a certain degree of media centeredness. In Germany, one would not expect these characteristics based on the structural context present, but they can be explained by assuming an American influence – indicating the recently often challenged process of “Americanization”. That this process would be found in German press coverage and not in the coverage of the other two

countries makes sense: The (political) relationship between Germany and the US has been comparatively close, especially since the end of WWII. The link between the two countries is particularly distinctive with regard to the press, as the US was mainly responsible for the constitution of the German media landscape after the war. The US also had a large influence on the subsequent training and conception of journalists and journalism, as it imported the objectivity norm into German journalism via the obligatory training of media actors after the war. Thus, the meanwhile often criticized concept might actually hold true with regard to Germany in certain aspects. A closer examination of this speculation will be conducted when analyzing the differences between countries across time which will also yield more information about possible hybrid outcomes – in German political press coverage, the clearest separation of news and opinion as well as the lowest number of implicit comments can be found; a difference which vanishes when comparing the two models. This could indicate a combination of the American standard of objectivity with the longstanding tradition of journalists as political commentators in Germany, which results in political coverage combining opinion and objectivity as equally legitimate, albeit separate approaches to political coverage.

In Switzerland, on the other hand, the character of political press coverage was much as expected. It contained a higher level of dialog than the German coverage and also included a higher number of equally presented perspectives and also emphasized consensus more than did its German counterpart. These features support the assumption that the consensus-orientation of the Swiss political system and culture are visible also in political press coverage. It has to be noted that Swiss coverage did not only include more consensus-focus but also a higher emphasis on conflict than German coverage. While this seems to contradict our assumptions, it can possibly be regarded as a sometimes necessary precondition for a focus on consensus, as in some cases the existence of a conflict might first to be established before the found consensus can be emphasized. The same is true for the higher level of strategic reporting we found in Swiss coverage compared to German coverage – if reporting focuses on a consensus reached or aimed for, the strategic processes taking place before the consensus could be found might move into the focus, as well. Taken together this might be an indicator not so much just for an emphasis on „all is good“-consensus, but rather for a political coverage which greatly focuses on the process of consensus-finding inherent in

Swiss political processes, precedent conflicts and strategic decisions included. Additionally supporting the correspondence of Swiss political press coverage with the inclusive character of Swiss direct consensus democracy is the higher number of different, also non-elite sources and the more common integration of personal narratives. Further findings of the Swiss data support this thesis: Negativism and criticism towards the government are lower than in Germany, coverage tends towards neutrality and provides substantive informational input about politics for the citizens: Articles are comparatively long and include a high percentage of foreign reports, and the amount of thematic instead of episodic frames is high. All these results indicate high political attention and information. The last feature characteristic for Swiss political press coverage is the initiative showed by Swiss journalists: The percentage of articles initiated from within the newspaper is the highest of all countries, the amount of suggestions is higher, too, and in contrast to Germany, article tone is often caused by the journalists instead of the sources. It seems that the idea of objectivity as a necessary standard for journalism has not yet taken hold as much in Switzerland as it has in Germany, as the number of implicit comments is higher than in all other countries (they also create the only exception regarding the neutrality of Swiss coverage as the majority of the comments is negative) and the degree of separation between news and opinion is lowest. This approach to the role of opinion in political media coverage visible within the coverage corresponds to the notion of political reporting which is prevalent in the Swiss code of media conduct which emphasized the relevance of interpretation and providing direction.

To sum up, differences between Germany and Switzerland are not quite as numerous as between the US and Britain, and while Swiss political press coverage corresponds to the theoretical expectations of a visible impact of the unique Swiss political system and culture onto the political media coverage, press coverage in Germany has shown to be more „americanized“ than we thought. Thus while H2b could be confirmed, large parts of H2a have to be rejected, as the influence of national structural characteristics does not seem as large in Germany. Overall, differences between the two models as indicated by the sizes of the effect measures were larger than differences between the individual countries. However, it is possible that meso-level factors actually have a larger impact on political media content than macro-level national factors, with differences between newspaper types being more

pronounced than the differences we have yet found between models and countries. Thus, we conducted a comparison between the national and regional newspapers across all countries.

Cross-organizational Comparison: National vs. Regional Newspapers Across All Countries

The following hypotheses were posited with regard to the differences between regional and national dailies.

H3: Political coverage in national newspapers is more in-depth and provides more contextual information and less personalization.

H4: Political coverage in regional newspapers displays a higher level of commercial logic, a more sacerdotal approach to politics and a greater proximity to the audience than political coverage in national newspapers.

Differences between national and regional newspapers were examined using cross-tabulations and t-tests. The differences found between the national and regional newspapers were not as large (as measured by the effect size) as between the individual countries. Thus it can be assumed that organizational meso-level influences are less dominant than national macro-level influences. Still, the comparison of the two newspaper-types yielded some interesting results which generally support common assumptions about the level of quality usually assigned to both types: Regional newspapers feature more characteristics which are often viewed as indicating a lower degree of quality –more personalization, negativism, sensationalism, scandal, emotionality, narratives, episodic frames and large visuals. All these characteristics correspond to commercial logic more than to media or political logic (again something which will be discussed more closely when analyzing processes of convergence). However, data also showed a greater amount of dialog, demands, focus on genuine events, tenor originating from sources and integration of personal narratives – features indicating a comparative closeness to and integration of the audience which cannot be found in the coverage of national newspapers. We therefore refer to a new pattern of coverage present, namely audience relation, which includes narratives, episodic frames, dialog and suggestions in political coverage. This coverage pattern is most prominent in the political reporting of regional newspapers while not as present in national newspapers` coverage. This of course makes sense as regional newspapers tend to cover a smaller area and are usually more closely

embedded in the regional surroundings than newspapers which provide nation-wide coverage and are published across a larger area. Additionally, a more explicit orientation towards a specific regional audience could also be interpreted as commercially oriented. National newspapers tend towards a more analytic political coverage: Besides generally longer articles including more quotes and sources, analytic pieces are more common than in regional newspapers (which mainly feature straight news) and more articles are analysis-than event-focused than in regional newspapers. Additionally, a greater variety of perspectives is included in the coverage, more non-genuine events are covered, there is a higher number of internally triggered articles and the level of strategic coverage and conflict-focus is higher than in the regional political coverage. These characteristics point towards a more active, analytic behavior on the side of the journalists, and a greater claim to explaining politics instead of just reporting on them. Thus, a greater correspondence to professional logic instead of commercial logic seems to manifest in the political coverage of national media, while regional media seem to tend more towards commercialization. Commercial orientation in the national newspapers seems lower – the only two possibly commercial features are strategic and conflict-focused coverage, however they can as easily be linked to the degree of analysis present in the political coverage of national newspapers as analysis will often center on the strategic behavior and conflicts of political actors. Thus, both hypotheses (H3 and H4) were supported by the data.

Table 16

Differences between National and Regional Newspapers

Coverage logic/ pattern	Variables	National NPs	Regional NPs	Cramer-V	p
Professional logic: Objectivity	Av. number of sources	3.66	2.75	8.108[a]	.000
	Av. number of quotes	3.99	2.64	8.245[a]	.000
Professional logic: Analytical coverage	Genuine event as object of article	26.7%	41.9%	.178	.000
	Thematic frames	51.6%	35.7%	.172	.000
	Analysis-focus ²)	2.54	2.25	6.809[a]	.000
	Variety of perspectives ¹)	53.1%	43.6%	.100	.000
	Strategy frames	48.6%	40.5%	.091	.000
	Conflict frames	43.4%	40.1%	.062	.039
	Analysis pieces	19.5%	14.5%	.146	.000
	Article tone originating from journalists	34.6%	26.2%	.125	.000
Commercial logic	Politician as private person	3.2%	6%	.068	.000
	Negative tone	28.2%	32.6	.103	.000
	Sensationalism	12.4%	19.9%	.108	.000
	Emotionality	11.5%	19.1%	.111	.000
	Av. size of visuals	2.56	2.53	.133[a]	.894
Audience relation	Narratives	6.3%	8.6%	.043	.024
	Episodic frames	48.4%	64.3%	.172	.000
	Clear dialog	5.7%	10%	.204	.000
	Suggestions	76.2%	83.7%	.104	.000

n=2769 [a)] t ¹) Either a main perspective with several sub-perspectives or several equally weighted perspectives ²) Analysis-index going from 1 to 4

In summary it can thus be said that while there are not as many differences on the organizational level as on the national or even more abstract model-level, newspaper types do differ in their approach to news reporting with national newspapers focusing more on analysis and explanation and presumably being less influenced by commercial imperatives, and regional newspapers basing their coverage more on commercial considerations while at the same time exhibiting in some ways a closer relationship to their audience and region. What makes these results most interesting is the fact that regional newspapers constitute the backbone of the population`s newspaper supply at least in Germany and the US, to a large degree also in Switzerland. This means that the audience of political press coverage characterized by commercial logic might be greater than the audience reached by the less commercialized national newspapers mostly analyzed in academic media research. But this is an issue which needs to be addressed in a separate paper and cannot be discussed in greater length within the scope of this thesis.

Longitudinal Comparison

Transnational dynamics of convergence? While differences are observable between the political press coverage in different countries and also, to a lesser extent, in different newspaper types, the question how far these differences are constant over time has not yet been addressed. Under the assumption of the presence of mediatization and transnational processes of convergence, we expect certain developments over time in all countries and also specific disparities between the four countries regarding the features of political press coverage that change over time. To recapitulate, our research questions and hypotheses concerning temporal developments and transnational dynamics were the following:

RQ3: How does press coverage over time differ between countries and which transnational processes are visible over time?

H5: Adaption processes and fusion of various coverage characteristics (i.e. hybridization) are more common than unilinear adoption processes like Americanization..

RQ3a: To which extent is coverage in the different countries governed by media and/or commercial logic?

H6: Media and commercial logic have grown stronger over time in all four countries. This means that characteristics like simplification, polarization, conflict, personalization,

negativism and sensationalism as well as analysis and objectivity have increased in press coverage over time.
H7: Media and commercial logic are most dominant in the US coverage, dominant in British coverage, less dominant in German coverage and least dominant in Swiss coverage.
H8: Criticism towards the governing, personalization and strategic reporting will be highest in US coverage as they are facilitated by the political context.
H9: Criticism towards the governing will be low in German and Swiss coverage, as a sacerdotal approach to political coverage can be expected while a pragmatic approach is predominant in Great Britain and the US.

Longitudinal differences in all four countries were assessed using correlations between the years (1960, 1961, 2006, 2007) and individual variables as well cross-tabulations contrasting the values of variables in 1960/61 with the ones in 2006/07. The largest differences that could be found across all countries in coverage over time (i.e. in comparison between 1960/61 and 2006/07) only partly corresponded to the expectation of an increase of mediatization and commercial logic over the last decades; they speak more to an ascent of professional logic than to an increase in commercial logic: Objectivity and the closely related number of sources per article have risen in coverage since the 1960s, and the focus on analysis grew more dominant. Also, mentions of political parties became more numerous over time (with the evaluation of the respective parties remaining positive). However, contrary to our expectations, articles did not decrease in length but instead became lengthier, and while the presence of conflict in some countries as well as the increase of criticism could be seen as an indicator of a certain rise in commercialization, there is a decline in personalization (significantly so regarding individualization, and a non-significant but visible decline regarding politicians depicted in private situations) and article framing has become more thematic over time. Furthermore, we can see that audience relation has become more prominent over the years, with coverage including more personal narratives and dialog, producing stories which aim at a higher personal relevance for individual audience members. This development is paralleled by a higher degree of analysis present - which might imply a greater complexity of coverage in 2006/07 than in 1960/61 combined with the journalistic attempt to make this complexity accessible to the readers. Several more findings additionally imply stronger journalistic initiative and voice together with the increasing dominance of

strategies of objective reporting and a focus on analysis: Article tone which originated from the journalist increased compared to article tenor rooted in source`s quotes and internal article-triggers rose, as did the amount of implicit commentary. While at first glance contrary to the increase in objectivity strategies, this rise makes sense if also seen from a more procedural point of view: If objectivity is paramount, opinion cannot be openly and explicitly included into coverage. Thus, the likelihood of implicit integration of commentary rises. A comparison of the developments regarding objectivity and implicit comments between Germany, which traditionally values opinion in its political press coverage, and the US, which puts a much greater emphasis on neutral reporting, indicate rather complex dynamics: In Germany, the importance of the objectivity standard seems on the rise and is starting to accompany the tradition of opinionated political coverage. This combination results in a decrease of implicit commentary, presumably because according to the “novel” norm of objectivity, they are perceived as bias. Open and explicit opinion, on the other hand, is still present in German coverage and thus also provides an outlet for commentary on politics aside from implicit statements integrated into apparently neutral articles. In the US, on the other hand, a newly emerging importance of analytic coverage is added to a still rising dominance of the objectivity norm. But US political coverage does not know the tradition of opinionated political reporting and thus contains more barriers for publishing purely opinionated articles. This combination could be an explanation for a rising number of implicit commentaries in US political coverage, caused by a rising importance of objectivity as well as analysis, whereas similar developments in Germany lead to a decrease in implicit commentary. Table 17 shows all longitudinal differences across all countries.

Table 17

Longitudinal Differences Across All Countries

Coverage Pattern	Variables	1960/61	2006/07	Effect size	Sign.
Negativism	Negative tone	29.3%	30.9%	.053**[a]	-
	Conflict frame	40.5%	43.2%	.053[b]	.132
	Negative implicit commentary	37.1%	44.8%	.119[b]	.000
	Scandalization frame	10.4 %	18.1	.132[b]	.000
	Incompetence frame	33.8%	42.4%	.136[b]	.000
Objectivity-strategies	Objectivity-index	3.22	3.62	.177**[a]	-
	Av. number of quotes	2.91	3.85	.106**[a]	-
Partisan coverage	Occurrence of party mentions	21.8%	42.5%	.240[b]	.000
Metacoverage	References to media or PR	26.3%	30.8%	.093[b]	.000
Analytic coverage	Analysis pieces	15%	19.4%	.247[b]	.000
	Focus on analysis	61.9%	66.3%	.199**[a]	-
	Thematic frames	35.3%	53.4%	.208**[a]	-
	Clear strategy frames	6.9%	15.3%	.162[b]	.000
Journalistic initiative	Suggestions	78.8%	80.3%	.057[b]	.030
	(Negative) implicit commentary	37.1%	44.8%	.119[b]	.000
Simplification	Episodic frames	64.7 %	46.6 %	.208**[a]	-
	Focus on events	38.1 %	33.7 %	-.199**[a]	-
	Av. size of visuals	increase		.235**[a]	-
	Sensationalism frame	11.9 %	19.4 %	.103[b]	.000
Personalization	Individual in headline	32.1 %	22.4 %	.170[b]	.000
	Politician as private person	4.8 %	4.1 %	.019[b]	.325
Attention to (international) politics	Av. length of article	457 wrds[c]	508 wrds[c]	.058**[a]	-
	Av. size of article	9% of pg	11% of pg	.315**[a]	-

	Own country as focus of coverage	53.1%	60.1%	.325[b]	.000
Audience relation	Narratives	5.1%	9.5%	.084[b]	.000
	Dialog	40.8%	56.6%	.158[b]	.000

[a)] Pearson`s correlation coefficient [b)] Cramer-V [c)] Rounded

Besides indicators for a rising importance of objective reporting and analysis, the presence of dialog and personal narratives became stronger over time in all countries. Thus, it seems that while commercialization is not greatly visible across all countries, with the largest significant development that could be linked to commercialization an increase in the size of visuals, an increased proximity of political coverage to the ordinary reader seems to be present. Overall, H6 is supported regarding an increase of visualization and partisan coverage across all countries as well as a rise in analysis-focused coverage. All other aspects addressed in H6 are supported by the data in some countries but not in all, in some there are even countertrends observable. The findings so far thus paint a positive picture of the development of political press coverage during the last decades and show that H6 at least does not apply in a general sense (i.e. in the same degree) to all four countries. A further look at the individual countries` coverage is warranted, where we expect to find stronger indicators for media and commercial logic in the US, followed by the UK, Germany and, with the least number of indicators, Switzerland. This was the content of H7, which was supported by our findings regarding the Swiss coverage. Regarding Germany, Great Britain and the US, however, a slightly different picture emerged. Swiss coverage showed the least characteristics of mediatization and commercialization and generally fewer changes over time than the other countries` coverage. The number of mediatized or staged events did not increase, nor did the tenor, style or emotionality of articles. There was no increase in sensationalism, scandal, criticism towards the government (aspects which changed over time in all other countries), nor in conflict-focus, and the length of quotes also stayed the same on average. Swiss coverage however showed the largest increase in comparison with all other countries regarding analytic reporting, the integration of politicians as private persons, and national focus. Regarding national focus and personalization, this development is comprehensible especially as Swiss

coverage showed the lowest percentages on both of these dimensions in the 1960s and thus made a bigger leap than the other three countries.

German coverage displayed the largest increase in objectivity and the largest decrease in implicit comments on the one hand but also the steepest rise in party mentions and articles triggered internally on the other. The parallelism of these two developments indicates a rise of objectivity as well as analysis. There was no change in the amount of mediatized or staged events, nor in the degree of sensationalism, emotionality, context frames or national focus, which is to say no change in many indicators of commercial logic, but the focus on conflict as well as the length of quotes increased to a similar extent as in the British coverage. Interestingly, it is exactly these two features, which did not increase significantly in US coverage. The increase in quote length can again be explained by a rise in the relevance of the objectivity norm. The stronger focus on conflict, on the other hand, might be one indicator of commercialization. The political press coverage in Germany however, together with its counterpart in Switzerland, displayed the lowest focus on incompetence among all countries as well as the highest proportion of elite sources, thus our hypothesis H9 regarding a more sacerdotal, government-friendly approach to political reporting in the Democratic Corporatist Model is supported by our findings. Table 18 shows a list of the largest changes over time in German and Swiss coverage.

Table 18

Largest Changes over Time in Individual Countries: Germany and Switzerland

Coverage patterns	Variables	1960/61	2006/07	Effect size	Sign.
Switzerland					
Professional logic: Analytic reporting	Focus on analysis	2.06	2.96	.203**[a]	-
Commercial logic	Own country as focus of coverage	6.5%	48.9%	.630[a]	.000
Germany					
Professional logic: Objectivity	Objectivity strategies	3.09	3.68	.274**[b]	-
	Implicit comments	51.1%	33.9%	.246[a]	.000
Professional logic: Journalistic initiative	Articles initiated by journalist	9.5%	29.2%	.248[a]	.000
Commercial logic	Occurrence of party mentions	22.5%	50.2%	.297**[b]	-

n= 1698 [a)] Pearson`s correlation coefficient, level of significance = 0,01 (two-sided) [b)] Cramer-V

Examining the US coverage, for example, showed that the largest changes besides the size of the articles could be found regarding the increasing number of non-elite sources - a sign for a higher degree of inclusion - and regarding the mentioning of individuals in headlines, one of the indicators for personalization. This indicator, however, decreased over time, which opposes our expectations towards commercialization in the US. Only an increasing amount of infoboxes and sensationalism points into the direction of growing commercialization in US political press coverage, and possibly the fact that quotes have not gotten any longer in American coverage like they have in all other countries. This reliance on short soundbites, however, is balanced by the fact that there is also no change in the degree of conflict-focus, which could have been expected in case of an increasing influence of commercialization. But together with British coverage, the coverage in the Liberal Model displays evidence of increasing negativism (Pearson: .076*) and metacoverage (Cramer-V: .213, Chi: .000), however changes in Great Britain are much larger and more numerous than in the US: Surprisingly, there is no rise in objectivity strategies in British coverage (Pearson: .030 for the objectivity index, however the number of sources and perspectives is growing), instead a

growing reliance on colloquial style can be observed, both of which are unique developments among the four countries. Furthermore, the emphasis on scandals has been growing over the years, as has the focus on conflict and incompetence (indicating a higher level of criticism towards the government) as well as a generally negative tone. A rise of emotionality in the coverage parallels an increase in personal narratives and dialog. This indicates that while there is a rise of commercial logic taking place, it is accompanied by a growing proximity of the British political coverage to its audience. At the same time, however, the influence of the government is still visible and even growing if one takes the increasing length of quotes and coverage of staged events as indicators – it seems, that the news management of Blair and his predecessor has been successfully used to systematically introduce specific events and tailored quotes into the news coverage. However, there is also a countermovement visible in increased demands voiced by the journalists and, as already mentioned regarding negativism, an increase in reporting focusing on the incompetence of the government. This growing journalistic activity can also be observed in an increase of analytic reporting, which possibly counterbalances some commercial influences: There are more strategy and thematic frames in the coverage 2006/07 than 1960/61, and a higher degree of metacoverage can be found. Overall it seems that the political press coverage in the UK shows the most variance and even appears to traverse rather contradictory developments: A steep increase in commercial logic, growing influence of the government, journalistic initiative against the governing, less objectivity strategies and a rise of diverse perspectives as well as a rising proximity to the audience, all are detectable in the coverage. Possibly the peculiar “location” of Great Britain somewhere between the Liberal and the Democratic Corporatist Model, which has been visible before, causes a greater clash between traditional, politically active journalism, recently developed media savvy on the side of politics, and influences of commercial as well as professional media logic. Table 19 summarizes all changes over time for British and US coverage in comparison.

Table 19

Largest Changes over Time in Individual Countries: US and Great Britain

Coverage patterns	Variables	1960/61	2006/07	Effect size	Sign.
USA					
Diversity	Av. number of non-elite sources	.26	.93	.288**[b]	-
Commercial logic	Av. number of infoboxes	.03	.26	.288**[b]	-
	Sensationalism	4.8%	26.5%	-.324**[b]	-
	Individual in headline	35.5%	23.2%	.302[a]	.000
Great Britain					
Professional logic: Objectivity	Av. number of sources	2.02	4.6	.419**[b]	-
	Av. number of quotes	2.43	5.06	.288**[b]	-
	Diversity of perspectives [2])	10.3%	23.8%	.235**[b]	-
Professional logic: Analytical coverage	Strategy frames	15%	35.7%	.307**[b]	-
	Metacoverage	14.9%	31.9%	.242[a]	.000
	Thematic frames	32.1%	71%	.487**[b]	-
Commercial logic	Negative tone	18.4%	52.2%	.237**[b]	-
	Colloquial style	1.1%	12.1%	.314**[b]	-
	Scandalization frame	3.4%	31.4%	.357**[b]	-
	Conflict frame	45.5%	75.4%	.171**[b]	-
	Presence of emotionality	2.9%	20.3%	.262**[b]	-
	Incompetence frame	18.7%	55.6%	.281**[b]	-
Audience relation (vs. government relation)	Av. length of quotes	51 wrds[c]	85 wrds[c]	.169**[b]	-
	Staged events as objects of article	0%	29.5%	.261**[b]	-
	Suggestions [1])	.6%	18.8%	.464[a]	.000
	Narratives	3%	17.6%	.233[a]	.000
	Dialog	35%	77.8%	.430[a]	.000

n= 1071 [1]) Straight demands [2]) Several perspectives presented as equal [a)] Pearson`s correlation coefficient, level of significance = 0,01 (two-sided) [b)] Cramer-V [c)] Rounded

It seems as if Great Britain is caught between the front-lines – more so than any other of the four countries. Switzerland, international-relations-wise rather remote from the US, and Germany, closely connected to North America by its history after WWII, both seem to adapt more smoothly to changing conditions of political journalism (or at least, with less visible

turmoil in their press coverage): Germany by rather quickly adopting the American way, and Switzerland by yet ignoring it to some degree (supporting this statement are for example the missing increase in scandalization or criticism towards the government in Swiss coverage). Of course this puts it in very simple terms, but with regard to our sixth hypothesis (H6) we can now additionally say that the various indicators for media and commercial logic behave differently in the different countries: A focus on incompetence as well as scandal is indeed generally rising in all countries but Switzerland, and international coverage is indeed generally decreasing in all countries but in the US. Furthermore, the use of objectivity strategies is increasing in all countries but Britain, where we can however observe a rise in the amount of quotes and sources included in coverage. Rising negativism is visible in the data for US and British coverage but not for its German and Swiss counterparts, as is sensationalism and metacoverage. Conflict is becoming more dominant in German and British coverage, while increasing simplification, personalization and decrease in article length could not be confirmed for any country in the analysis.

With regard to H7 we can state that media and commercial logic are indeed stronger in the US and British coverage than in the German and Swiss coverage, however British coverage seems to have outrun American coverage and feature more commercial logic than its US counterpart. German coverage, on the other hand, is not quite as commercially affected as the US press content, but has come closer. Switzerland, as expected, displays the least amount of media and commercial logic in its political press coverage. And H8 is supported by the data – US coverage indeed contains the most criticism towards the governing, the most personalization and the most strategic reporting, however as we can observe changes regarding all three features, it can be assumed that they are not just a cause of rather static factors of the political system but rather that these national features interact with commercial logic over time. Hypothesis H9 was also supported by the data – German and Swiss coverage displays less criticism towards the government, in line with the assumption of Blumler & Gurevitch (1995, 2001) of a more sacerdotal approach to political media coverage. Additionally, coverage in German and Swiss newspapers includes a higher amount of elite sources than the anglo-American coverage, which also supports our hypothesis.
To receive a larger picture on the changes across all countries, a one-factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with regard to the homogeneity of the four countries in

1960/61 vs. 2006/06. The data was split up according to the two decades, and the countries were defined as factor. All variables of which quasi-metrical or at least interval level could be assumed were included. Of course this analysis can only be understood as an indicator for possible trends, and cannot provide much more than an impression of the variance within vs. across countries, but it is still a valuable tool to help understand the complex dynamics and interrelations which need to be taken into account when doing comparative political communication research and especially when including the factor of time. More sophisticated analyses need to follow in the future to confirm the suggestions below.

For 14 variables we found an increase in differences between countries (indicated by a growing F-value), for 13 variables a decrease in heterogeneity was visible (indicated by a decreasing F-value) (see table 20). A detailed interpretation of all individual variable values in each country and decade goes beyond the scope of this thesis, but it can be said that the alignments which have taken place concern professional as well as commercial logic: The number of quotes has risen, as has the variety of perspectives, and the application of objectivity strategies. Additionally, journalistic tenor has increased in German and Swiss coverage and decreased in US and British coverage, while mixed tenor has increased in the US and UK and decreased in Germany and Switzerland to create a homogeneous shape. Only regarding the number of sources have the countries` newspapers become more heterogeneous – despite the fact that the number of sources has risen in all countries. Strategy frames and suggestions have also both risen in all countries, causing the coverage to become more homogeneous with regard to journalistic initiative. However, despite similar developments concerning article types (fewer pure news-articles), analysis-focus (higher) and article triggers (more external triggers) in all newspapers, these variables showed a rise in heterogeneity across countries. It seems that the adjustment towards the objectivity norm did not encounter many barriers in any country, making an alignment easier and faster – American objectivity strategies (which are visible also in the number of quotes and the pro-contra-structure of a diversity of perspectives) were quickly adopted, it seems, by the European countries. Commercial logic, on the other hand, shows a more mixed picture: While a national focus has risen in Swiss coverage and decreased in US coverage to reach a certain middle ground, personalization (as indicated by the less commercial individualization of headlines) has partly decreased in all four countries to an equally low level; the depiction of politicians as private

persons has also become more homogeneous across countries via a decrease in Germany and the US and an increase in Great Britain and Switzerland. Similar international adjustments have taken place regarding sensationalism and conflict: The coverage in all countries has become less extreme – there is less clear focus on either consensus or conflict in all countries anymore, and sensationalism has risen in Germany while it has decreased in Switzerland, the US and the UK to create a more homogeneous picture. And in Britain, the focus on media has grown and the focus on PR declined while the exact opposite process took place in the other three countries.

These indicators of commercial logic which have become more heterogeneous, on the other hand, mostly show a similar development: the size of visuals and number of infoboxes has grown, as has the use of personal narratives and the mention of parties; the integration of scandals and emotionality has decreased. It thus becomes clear that a similar development over time does not necessarily mean a similar outcome. The interplay between more or less static systemic factors as we have examined in the first chapters and transnational dynamic processes like modernization or, if you like, Americanization, leads to various outcomes, strengthening commercialism in one country while weakening it in another, facilitating analysis-focused reporting while making it more difficult somewhere else. And we can conclude that while processes of mediatization and commercialization do seem to take place, they do not automatically cause convergence between the countries. Objectivity, it seems, has indeed transferred from the US context to European press coverage, as has, to some extent, and with more modifications, the analysis-focus perpetuated by the professionalization of journalism (also strongest in the US). Regarding these two aspects one could thus speak of a certain Americanization or, in the case of analytic reporting and the symbiosis it assumes with the tradition of political commentary in Europe, hybridization of political press content. Interestingly, indicators of commercial logic cause a visible convergence of political press coverage over time, but one which originates from different developments in the individual countries (i.e. a decrease in national focus in US coverage and an increase in national focus in Swiss coverage makes the two types of coverage more alike). It thus seems that the common assumption of an overall rise of commercial logic which is usually connected with fears of dysfunctional political media coverage holds true only if observing coverage from a very distant standpoint. A closer view reveals that it is in many aspects an alignment between

countries instead of an overall rise which leads to a homogenous level of commercialism. Our analyses suggest the contrary phenomenon for professional logic: Here, similar (homogeneous) processes in all countries (like the rising relevance of objectivity and analysis as journalistic standards) lead to a more heterogeneous picture due to the dynamics occurring between the integration of new and existing standards and structures. Worldwide, something like a middle ground regarding commercial logic seems to develop, while the conciliation of professional logic and its norms across countries seems much more difficult. With regard to our hypothesis H5 we thus have to say that the expected distinction between convergence or homogenization and fusion or adaptation (and, possibly, polarization) is not viable for the media content level. Rather, the development of media content over time points to one of these processes likely taking place but does not necessarily mirror this process. Rather, a homogenization of, for example, journalistic standards seems to be able to lead to a (possibly transitional?) heterogenization of media content, and a divergence in the importance of commercial logic can lead to a more homogeneous media content by creating somewhat of a middle ground (say for example in ethnocentric reporting).

Table 20

Analysis of Variance 1960/61 vs. 2006/07

Coverage logic	Variable	F (1960/61)	F (2006/07)
Professional logic: Analysis			
	Type of article	2.624	6.486
	Focus on analysis	6.408	22.528
	Article trigger	3.021	7.107
	Article tone	8.228	16.802
	Suggestions	303.546	223.851
	Thematic frames	12.226	16.143
	References to media or PR (metacoverage)	5.563	2.559
	Strategy frame	55.325	18.617
Professional logic: Objectivity			
	Number of sources	98.874	99.542
	Number of quotes	117.210	98.521
	Diversity of perspectives	14.885	11.288
	Source of tone	8.228	27.146
	Objectivity index	17.433	15.647
Commercial logic			
	Size of visuals	19.386	165.995
	Number of infoboxes	1.607	4.386
	Style	8.245	12.329
	Narratives	13.477	16.849
	Scandalization frame	9.552	25.331
	Presence of emotionality	4.660	16.449
	Incompetence frame	3.296	17.898
	Occurrence of party mentions	3.818	12.635
	Own country as focus of coverage	221.112	60.238
	Individual in headline	47.121	25.692
	Politicians as private persons	11.721	6.718
	Sensationalism frame	19.918	13.506
	Conflict frame	24.857	21.849

Levels of correspondence. The answer to our last research question concerning cross-country differences is still missing: To which factors do differences among the analyzed political press coverage correspond the closest: Organizational differences between types of newspapers, systemic differences on the national level or transnational dynamics across countries and over time? (RQ4) To facilitate an answer which is interpretable across variables, a factor analysis was conducted which included all content-related variables. Ten variables were included in the final solution, all possessing values over .420 (see table 21). A factor analysis across all variables had yielded number of party mentions and length of article as two self-contained factors with Eigenvalue over 1, and the following factor analysis (main components analysis with Oblimin rotation) resulted in four largely independent factors which explain 71.3% of the variance between the 10 variables included.

Table 21

Communalities of Variables

Variable	**Communality**
Suggestions	.935
Article tone	.869
Objectivity index	.868
Consensus frame	.805
Analysis index	.757
Competence frame	.588
Context frame	.579
Source of tone	.485
Individuals in headlines	.423
Diversity of perspectives	.421

The four factors parallel four dimensions which have already emerged several times during the previous analyses: The first factor loads strongest on article tone and also on consensus- and competence-frames. It thus combines a positive tenor with an emphasis on consensus and competence and describes a rather positive, affirmative attitude towards the government (FAC affirmation). The second factor`s dominant variable is the analysis-focus, additionally it contains context frames and thus fully focuses on analytic reporting (FAC analysis). The third factor is dominated by the objectivity index and also includes a variety of perspectives and

article tenor originating from sources- this factor thus centers on objectivity (FAC objectivity). The fourth and last factor includes the presence of suggestions in an article and headlines that do not contain individuals- this implies, that if suggestions or demands are voiced in an article, they are usually not addressed at a specific, concrete person but kept rather abstract (FAC demands).

Table 22

Factors

	Variable charges	
FAC Objectivity	Objectivity index	.925
	Diversity of perspectives	.607
	Tone of article originating from journalist	-.605
FAC Affirmation	Tone (positive)	.927
	Consensus frame	.883
	Competence frame	.764
FAC Demands	Presence of demands/suggestions	-.939
	Individual in headline	-.494
FAC Analysis	Analysis index	.859
	Context frame	.757
	Individual in headline	.465
	Source tenor	.407

Again, we additionally treated the length of an article (FAC length) as well as the number of party mentions (FAC party) as factors, too. Table 23 shows that according to the low correlations between the factors (the only exception being a somewhat higher correlation between demands and analysis), orthogonality of the factors can be assumed and they can be interpreted as separate.

Table 23

Correlation Matrix between Factors

	Affirmation	**Analysis**	**Objectivity**	**Demands**
Affirmation	1.000	-.084	-.096	.089
Analysis	-.084	1.000	-.136	-.217
Objectivity	-.096	-.136	1.000	.032
Demands	.089	-.217	.032	1.000

In a next step, several univariate analyses of variance (GLM) were conducted for each factor, including year, country, and newspaper type as independent variables/covariates. Affirmation as well as party mentions displayed the largest and most significant effect sizes between years.[88] Only demands were not significantly impacted by the time dimension, while the development of the analysis and objectivity factors corresponded with newspaper types as well as country and year but was most distinct between countries.

Table 24

GLM: The Impact of Country, Newspaper Type and Time on Political Press Coverage

		F	**Sig.**
FAC Objectivity	Year	23.702	.000
	Country	33.209	.000
	Newspaper	13.190	.000
FAC Affirmation	Year	34.659	.000
	Country	3.848	.009
	Newspaper	2.826	.093
FAC Demands	Year	0.91	.762
	Country	133.108	.000
			.024
	Newspaper	5.091	
FAC Analysis	Year	57.263	.000
	Country	65.071	.000
	Newspaper	5.425	.000

In more detail, results showed that the role of what we called demands corresponded to the individual countries, with Swiss coverage displaying the lowest amount of combination of demands and individual politicians, German and US coverage in between and British coverage with the highest level of combining demands and political individuals. This speaks to the common assumption of British press coverage being more aggressive and direct than its counterparts in other countries and can certainly be explained to some degree by the lack of privacy protection in the UK. Regarding objectivity, an increase across all countries is visible.

[88] Party mentions showed significances at .000 for comparison between years and countries but only .020 between newspaper types, article length displayed a significance of .000 for all three dimensions.

Still the US could be defined as a homogenous subgroup contrasting the other three countries, and national newspapers also differed from regional newspapers. Thus, objectivity is most dominant in US political coverage, more likely in national than regional papers, and these distinction are additionally superimposed by an increase over time across all countries. Affirmation, on the other hand, showed a decrease over time across all countries, pointing towards a decreasing closeness between media and politics in all countries. Party mentions and article length increased over time, and party mentions divided countries into two homogenous groups (F=140.440): Switzerland and the US (with less mentions) versus Germany and Great Britain (with a higher amount of party mentions). The level of newspaper type – regional vs. national – was important for article length (F=228.604): Parallel to the findings discussed earlier, national newspapers tend towards longer articles (as the variable defining newspaper type has only two values, no groups could be created, but grouping the countries resulted in a double load of Switzerland and three groups, thus supporting the assumption of a larger importance of organizational types than country). National newspapers also show a trend towards more analysis than the regional papers, but this factor also corresponds to time and countries: Analysis has increased over time, but between the countries the US is distinguished by a lower level of analysis than the three European countries, as a Gabriel-post-hoc-test showed. The lower mean values of the analysis-index and context-frames in US coverage versus coverage in the European countries support this finding.

Regarding the findings of the longitudinal comparison it thus seems that the relevance of our previous distinction between commercial and professional media logic is even higher than expected. Additionally, professional logic can be divided into two aspects, objectivity and analysis. Both have to be understood as norms applied to journalistic work, thus both can be identified by specific practices visible in media coverage, as Tuchman (1978) already assumed for objectivity. But the two standards do not occur parallelly - rather, the objectivity norm is, as explicated previously, rooted in the US coverage and still most dominant there. Analysis as a journalistic norm, however, originates in Europe with its tradition of political commentary, and its indicators are still more visible in German, Swiss and British coverage than in US coverage. But both concepts are alike in the way that both have started spreading internationally. Both have become stronger over time, and both have spilled over to become

visible in Europe as well as the US. The result, however, is not necessarily a transnational homogenization of political press coverage, as we have argued already regarding the homogenization of individual variable values over time. As the different types of professional logic diffuse and commercial logic becomes stronger over time, they interact with the conditions and contexts present in the different countries. And as these contexts differ not just regarding the more or less static structures of political and media system and political communication culture but also regarding the status quo of analysis and objectivity as guidelines for political journalism, the results vary across countries. In short: Although an increase of concepts like objectivity and analysis as well as some commercially driven aspects can be determined across all countries, this does for the most part not lead to transnational convergence. Rather, as what Norris and Inglehart (2009) describe as "fusion" takes place, the political press coverage in the individual countries changes and leads to dynamics of homogenization as well as heterogenization regarding different factors. The introduction of the objectivity norm into a country whose press traditionally includes political commentary and opinionated reporting might not lead to less opinionated reporting, but could cause a sharper separation between news and commentary due to the newly acquired awareness of the importance of objectivity (something similar can be observed in German coverage, for example). The introduction of analysis into the political press coverage of a country previously strongly oriented towards objectivity, on the other hand, could lead to the attempt of integrating analysis without breaching the rules of the objectivity norm, which could then lead to an integration of more implicit commentary or less strong separation between news and opinion (as is the case in US coverage). Thus, these mutual influences would not lead to a convergence of press coverage nor to a clear divergence, but they can cause, as we have seen, a growing heterogenization between countries despite a growing dominance of identical concepts of professional and commercial media logic transnationally. Figure 5 shows a systemic depiction of this process. This supposition corresponds with the fact that journalists worldwide agree about the importance of objectivity (e.g. Donsbach & Klett 1993), but that media coverage still displays observable differences in this regard: Already existing professional norms are taken for granted and not perceived as external norms but rather internalized. And unlike systemic factors like the type of government or media regulations, which are observable features of the system in which one works, journalistic norms or standards cannot be as easily assessed and related to external structures. It could thus be

proposed that the internalization which takes place on the subject level, as Reinemann (2007) suggests, is even stronger regarding journalistic norms and standards than for structural features that a journalist experiences day to day.

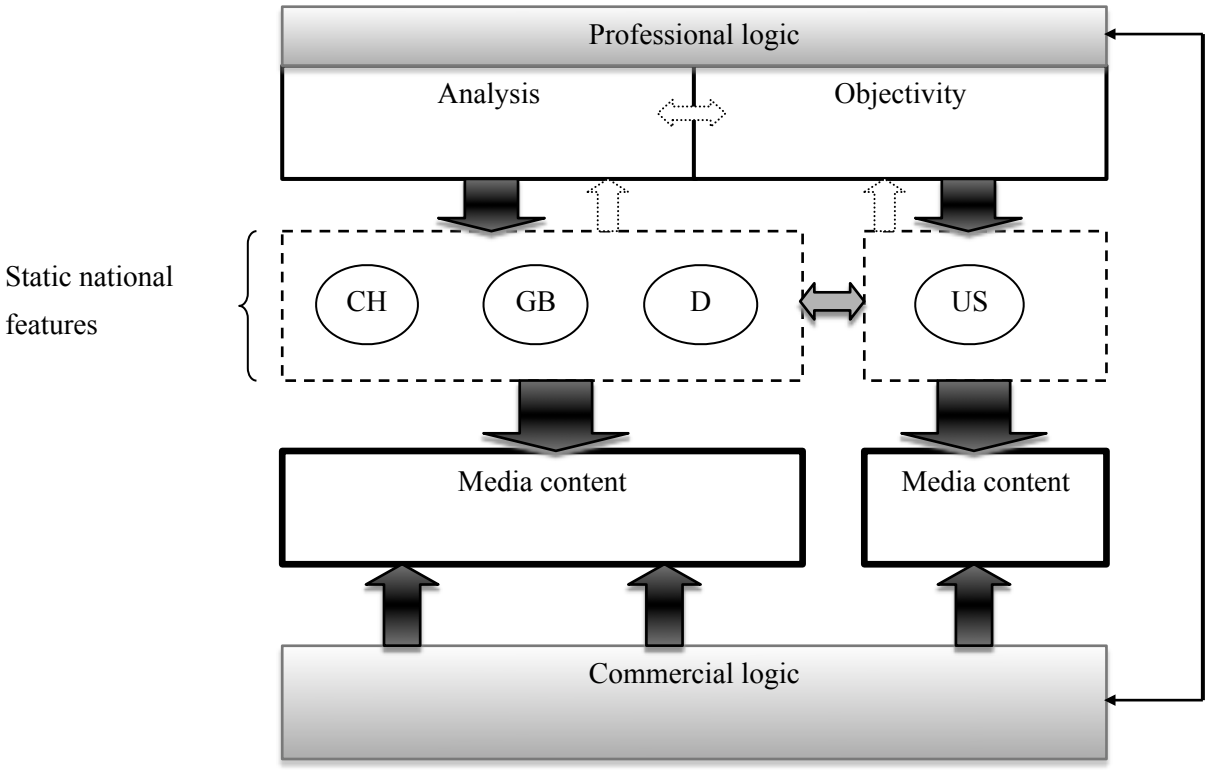

Figure 5. Transnational Interrelationships between Professional Norms and Media Content

Assessing Quality: Democratic News Standards Across Countries

The preceding explications give a detailed impression of the character of political press coverage in Germany, Switzerland, Britain and the US as well as an examination of the correspondences between different types of coverage and national, organizational and transnational factors, but they cannot provide a normative assessment of the quality of each of these types of coverage. They cannot answer our fifth and last research question: What standards of democratic news coverage can be distinguished across countries and over time? (RQ5) Therefore, we developed several indicators for democratic quality, based on four democratic paradigms, to test the following hypothesis:

H10: Based on the findings of Ferree et al. and on the characteristics of political communication culture in each country, German and Swiss political affairs coverage is likely to tend towards elite democratic standards, while British and American political affairs

coverage can be expected to tend towards more participatory standards, with US press coverage presumably exhibiting the most discourse democratic characteristics of all four countries.

The data was analyzed with view on several variables relevant for the different democratic standards. To recapitulate: Objective, event-focused coverage, negativity, a focus on scandals, the integration of mainly elite and expert sources as well as low journalistic initiative and a lack of criticism towards the government, suggestions or conflict are quality characteristics for the political media coverage if applying elite democracy standards. Opinionated and partisan coverage, analysis, journalistic initiative and suggestions are quality characteristics for political media coverage under application of the participatory-pluralist paradigm, while analysis, a focus on consensus and dialog and a neutral tenor mark quality coverage under the participatory-republican paradigm of democracy. The somewhat utopian discourse paradigm defines the inclusion of various, possibly unorthodox styles (like personal narratives) as well as long quotes, non-established sources and dialog as indicator for quality political coverage. To assess if our assumption that these variables indeed describe patterns which vary between countries was correct, we conducted a multinomial logistic regression[89] across the above listed content variables. We did not include party evaluations which have shown no variance over time or countries, and we also excluded scandalization, conflict-focus and negative tone. If these variables were included in the assessment of democratic indicators, Great Britain and the US would exhibit as many elite democratic standards as Germany. However, these three features largely coincide with media and commercial logic and also have proven to be of importance in longitudinal changes related to these dynamics especially in the Liberal Model. We thus decided to ascribe conflict-focus and negativity in political coverage to an increase in commercial and media logic and exclude them from our assessment of democratic quality indicators – otherwise we would have to assume that either anglo-American media have become more focused on elite standards (i.e. qualitatively better regarding these standards) or that the quality and soundness of politics and politicians has decreased over time and made a larger degree of "warning the citizens" on the side of the media necessary. Both assumptions

[89] The multinomial regression is a more recent variation of the discriminant analysis, and while based on a different logic provides results which can be interpreted comparable to the discriminant analysis.

run contrary to common comprehension of the relationship between media and politics and are difficult to sustain, at least without further in-depth investigation which the design of this study is not prepared to provide. Table 25 lists all variables included.

Table 25

Variables of Democratic Standards Included in Multinomial Logistic Regression

Variable
Objectivity vs. opinionated coverage
Event-focus
No. of elite - vs. non-established sources
No. of expert sources
Article triggered by journalist
Incompetence frame
Suggestions & demands
Consensus frame
Analytical coverage
Dialog
Presence of narratives
Length of quotes

The analysis (Nagelkerke: .635) confirmed correct classification for more than half of all cases except in Switzerland. Under inclusion of only the data from 1960/61, the regression had an even higher Pseudo-R-Square (Nagelkerke: .793) and correct classification was provided for over 80% of German and US articles, more than 60% of British articles and 50% of Swiss articles – these were more correctly predicted for 2006/07 (see table 26).[90] This

[90] It has to be noted that the unequal size of groups compared, i.e. the higher amount of German and US articles leads to a certain slant in the prediction, causing the percentage of correctly predicted German and American articles to be slightly higher as the probability for correct prediction in this cases is higher, too.

indicates a better fit of the chosen variables in more recent years for a majority of the countries.

Table 26

Correct Classification of Articles in 1960/61 and 2006/07 by Democratic Indicators

		Predicted				
		Germany	**Switzerland**	**USA**	**Britain**	**% correct**
60s	**Germany**	107	3	17	0	84.3%
	Switzerland	6	8	2	0	50.0%
	USA	17	2	164	6	86.8%
	Great Britain	2	0	13	23	60.5%
06/07	**Germany**	80	21	14	8	65.0%
	Switzerland	17	38	3	3	62.3%
	USA	25	1	82	8	70.7%
	Great Britain	12	2	20	34	50.0%

Following, the democratic indicators visible in political press coverage in the US, UK, Germany and Switzerland will be discussed in more detail. Some indicators were rather low across all countries (especially expert sources, personal narratives and emotionality were rare in coverage across all countries and years), as previous analyses have already shown. These indicators were interpreted in each country`s coverage in relation to their occurrence in the other countries rather than in relation to the general occurrence (i.e. emotionality is generally very low across all countries but the highest degree of emotionality can be found in Britain). Overall, no country shows a pattern completely identical to the quality standards of one of the paradigms, but certain trends towards paradigms are discernible as expected. Furthermore, coverage in Germany and Switzerland displays more indicators of elite democracy than overall coverage in the Liberal Model, which corresponds with hypothesis H10, however, as will be shown shortly, this hypothesis is only partly supported by our findings.

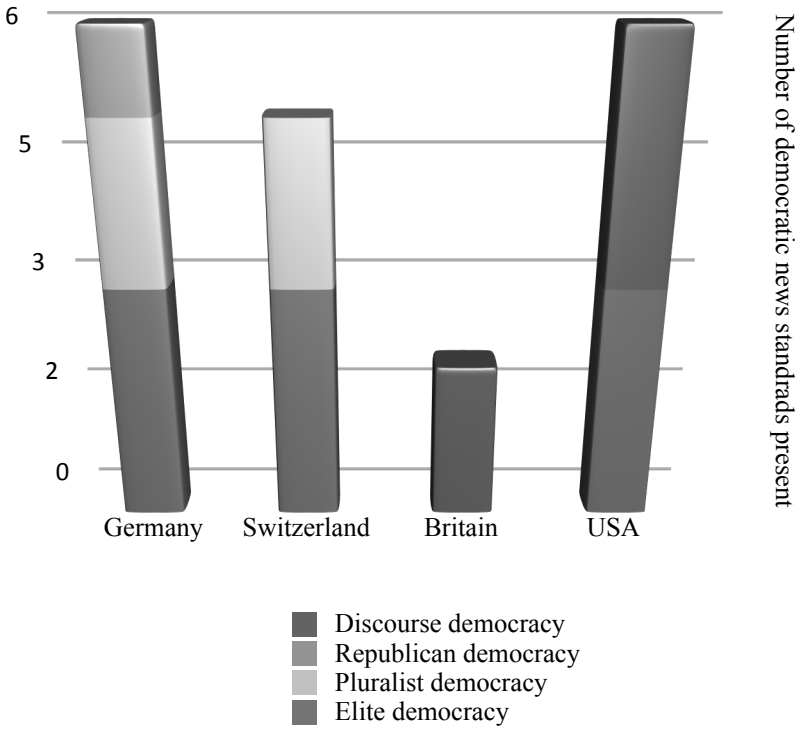

Figure 6. Number of Democratic News Standards Present in Political Press Coverage

As figure 6 shows, American, German and Swiss coverage displayed an equally high number of quality indicators paralleling elite democracy (for values of the individual variables see table 27). These indicators were nonexistent in the British press. The two Democratic Corporatist countries also contained a higher amount of quality indicators related to pluralist democracy – Swiss coverage more so than German coverage - which were completely absent from coverage in the Liberal Model. Quality indicators paralleling republican democracy could be found in British and German coverage but not in US or Swiss coverage, and indicators for quality standards related to discourse democracy were observed only in the two countries of the Liberal Model but not in Germany or Switzerland. It can be said that Swiss political press coverage is most clearly focused regarding quality standards and corresponds mostly to pluralist democratic paradigms: It includes numerous suggestions and demands, articles initiated by journalists, and article tone originating from the journalist and displays the lowest use of objectivity strategies across all four countries. Thus Swiss political coverage shows a high degree of journalistic activity and not much reliance on objectivity, which points towards journalism aimed at promoting specific interests and actively taking part in the negotiation of interest group dominance. Together with the fact that no remarkable amount of partisan coverage could be determined, these findings closely correspond to the macro-level

of Swiss political context whose process of decision-making is based on negotiations between various (economic, political and social) integrated interest groups and in which active and involved citizens play an important role. At the same time, the greater proximity between media and government in the Democratic Corporatist Model, also described by Blumler & Gurevitch (2001) as more sacerdotal, is visible in the quality indicators of Swiss coverage that tend more towards an elitist understanding of democracy: Established experts play an important role as sources in political reporting, and criticism towards the government is rare. The latter is also true for German political press coverage, and while some indicators for participatory paradigms are also present, political reporting in Germany is mainly characterized by an elitist approach to democratic media quality. The diversity of perspectives is comparatively low, article tone is dominantly neutral, and the majority of sources are established sources. These findings correspond to Ferree et al.`s (2002) conclusion that "German discourse is dominated by accountable state and party actors" and represents, with some exceptions, "a good approximation of the representative liberal ideal" (p. 252), which can to a large degree be equated with our concept of elite democracy. Percentages of journalistic initiative in triggering articles as well as article tone originating from the journalist – both quality standards belonging to the pluralist paradigm – are not as high as in Swiss coverage but still bespeak the long tradition of political commentary in German press coverage. And the in comparison highest number of clearly thematic (i.e. contextual) frames could be viewed as quality standard referring to republican democracy. Thus in Germany we find a broader mix of quality standards than in all other countries.

Table 27

Democratic News Standards in Country Comparison

	Corresp. democratic paradigm	Indicators	
Germany	Elite democracy	One main perspective	58.5%
		Factual tone	44.6%
		Fraction of established sources	84.8%
		Focus on competence of the government	62.4%
	Pluralist democracy	Article triggered by journalist	19.7%
		Tone of article originating from journalist	41%
	Republican democracy	Clear thematic frames	16%
Switzerland	Elite democracy	Expert sources	2%
		Focus on competence of the government	73.7%
	Pluralist democracy	Journalistic article trigger	23.9%
		Articles without objectivity-strategies	3.5%
		Tone of article originating from journalist	58%
		Journalistic suggestions/demands present	100%
Great Britain	Discourse democracy	Personal narratives	11%
		Clear emotionality frames	3.4%
USA	Discourse democracy	Length of quotes	134 wrds.
		Personal narratives	12.9%
		Clear dialog	17.4%
	Elite democracy	Articles integrating all objectivity-strategies	20.3%
		Tone of article originating from sources	56.6%
		Event-focus	28.1%

British political press coverage does not show any indicators of elite democracy quality standards. It is mostly dominated by discourse democracy-standards, including the a high number of personal narratives and the comparatively highest degree of emotionality – both non-ordinary features of coverage content and style which could be expected to facilitate inclusion and interest of "ordinary" people. The low amount of suggestions and demands in British coverage (35.2%) compared to coverage in the other three countries is the only

characteristic pointing towards an attitude corresponding to the republican paradigm of democracy. In American political press coverage, the most indicators can be found for the two most "extreme" understandings of democracy, if you will, elite and discourse democracy: US coverage displays the highest amount of clear objectivity strategies and article tone originating from sources – two quality characteristics which correspond to elite democratic theories. It also includes the most explicit dialog, which while also in line with republican theory can be interpreted as indicator towards discourse democracy especially since US coverage also presents a similarly high number of personal narratives as British coverage and the longest quotes of all four countries.

In summary we can say that H10 is only supported to some extent: Coverage not just in the Democratic Corporatist model but in all countries except Britain still corresponds largely to elite democratic standards, paralleled in objectivity and established sources. It is also this type of democratic understanding which is mirrored in the professional notion of objectivity. Besides this, Switzerland shows clear links to its political system with the realization of a number of standards related to the pluralist paradigm of democracy, while Great Britain, which showed the least democratic standard indicators, tends towards discourse democracy. For US political press coverage, the data show a mix between elite democracy and discourse democracy standards. Interestingly, both US and German coverage also display a more event-focused than analysis-focused coverage (28.1% and 26.2% respectively, while the British and Swiss numbers are below 20%), which supports the notion of elite democracy more so than for example the republican democratic paradigm. The overall findings generally correspond to our assumption that there seems to be the most mutual dynamic between German and US press coverage which also affects the definition of quality, while Swiss coverage as well as its understanding of quality political coverage is still strongly defined by its political system and structures. UK coverage, on the other hand, is difficult to classify into the provided democratic quality standards as it displays only very few of the relevant variables. More research seems to be needed to deepen understanding at this point.

Condensed Results

To conclude this study, we want to recapitulate the four main goals which we set out to achieve: (1) the detailed examination of the interplay between internal and external factors in

the continuous development of political media coverage in different Western democracies as well as in an overview of the Western hemisphere, (2) the analysis of the actual effects and indicators of the ongoing process of mediatization on various types of political press coverage at various points in time, (3) the assessment of manifestations of transnational processes of convergence in various types of political press coverage, and lastly (4) a suggestion on how the the normative values and judgements connected with the development of a more transnationally homogeneous style of political media coverage (i.e. the assumed quality of such coverage) can be assessed comparatively by applying different understandings of democracy. We suggested a large-scaled, comprehensive framework with which to examine the linkage between internal and external factors and influences on the characteristics of national political press coverage, the importance and consequences of the process of mediatization, the notion of commercialization and transnational processes of convergence for styles and patterns of political press coverage and the consequences and influences of national systemic context factors on patterns of political press coverage throughout the last 50 years. Finally, we assessed the aspect of the normative quality of political press coverage in different points in time and different countries via the presence of democratic quality standards. We identified three levels on which content and style of political media coverage is defined and which are linked in a close mutually influential interrelationship: The systemic macro-level, the organizational meso-level, and the individual micro-level. Furthermore, we have identified transnational, longitudinal processes of convergence expected between Western democracies over the last decades, and have referred to the logics governing media coverage which result from these various forces in combination with growing mediatization. We assumed that these various factors form clusters of influential factors on political press coverage, differing with time and context as the structure of discursive opportunities creating media coverage patterns changes with the relevance of different influences and the coverage logics pertaining to them. For this purpose, we examined the following in more detail:

- The difference of press coverage between countries (see RQ1).
- Differences of coverage between newspaper types (see RQ2).
- Differences of press coverage over time between countries; transnational processes present (see RQ3).
- Adherence of coverage patterns in different countries to indicators of mediatization (see RQ3a).

- Importance of various influential factors on the micro-, meso- and macro-level on patterns of political press coverage (i.e. organizational factors, systemic national factors and transnational processes) (see RQ4).
- Understandings of democracy mirrored in the patterns of political press coverage in different countries (see RQ5).

Regarding the first part of our empirical analysis, cross-country comparison and the assessment of two different models of political press coverage, and thus RQ1, our findings support the majority of the hypotheses posed: H1, H2 and H2b and hence our expectations towards Hallin & Mancini`s typology as well as our detailed assumptions about political press coverage in Switzerland were supported in full:
H1: Political media coverage in the US and Great Britain (i.e. in the countries of the Liberal Model) is characterized by personalization, strategy frames, negativism, and conflict-focus.
H2: Political media coverage in Germany and Switzerland (i.e. in the countries of the Democratic Corporatist Model) shows less conflict, less negativism, less personalization, little to no criticism of the government or governing, less strategic framing, and a greater reliance on established sources.
H2b: Coverage in Switzerland is characterized by dialog, a focus on consensus, issue coverage, an integration of citizens` perspective and suggestions or demands towards the governing, a reliance on various sources but domination of elite sources, partisanship, interpretive and opinionated reporting and a general dominance of political logic. There is little criticism towards the governing, little negativism and little personalization.

The analysis of the Liberal and Democratic Corporatist Model took place on the most abstract and hence most simplified level compared to all our analyses, thus it makes sense that its results are rather clear-cut and as expected. However, the use of Hallin & Mancini`s framework and the comparison of not simply individual country`s coverage, but rather of coverage of different models of media and political systems also allows us to see our findings regarding these models as generalized findings, independent from national idiosyncracies and specifics and applicable for the press coverage of certain types or models of countries. The findings regarding specific countries, on the other hand, give examples of how and under which circumstances national as well as transnational, longitudinal contextual factors can

influence the coverage patterns of the press within one model. Swiss political press coverage, for example, is least influenced by media and commercial logic and thus largely defined by national macro-level factors, which are easier to define and predict than the more fluent transnational dynamics. Hence the straightforward results in the Swiss case. Political media coverage in the US, while assumedly strongly corresponding to transnational dynamics, is still the most thoroughly examined country regarding media coverage and is also one of the few existent ideal types (Liberal Model) of Hallin & Mancini`s typology. This explains that our hypothesis regarding American political press coverage, H1a, was also supported to a large extent.

H1a: Coverage in the US is characterized by ethnocentrism, personalization, strategic reporting, objectivity, a variety of perspectives, reporting on staged events, media self-references, and increasing partisanship. There is little interpretive or opinionated coverage.

Results differed only regarding the amount of staged events, which is higher in British coverage, and the assumption of little opinionated reporting in the US, as the number of implicit comments was high.

H1b and H2a on the other hand concern the two countries which are less clearly classified, and accordingly the corroboration of the hypotheses pertaining to them was more difficult. These two hypotheses were only partly supported by the data.

H1b: Coverage in Great Britain is characterized by criticism towards the government, a focus on conflict, negativism, journalistic initiative, increasing personalization, increasing integration of expert sources, and heavy but declining partisanship. There is little interpretive or opinionated coverage as well as little objectivity.

H2a: Coverage in Germany is characterized by the integration of elite sources, interpretive and opinionated reporting, issue coverage, high but declining partisanship, and increasing objectivity. There is little personalization, sensationalism and criticism towards the government or negativism.

Criticism and conflict-focus in British coverage were actually higher than in US coverage, the integration of experts did not increase and partisanship was not declining but rather increasing. In Germany, press coverage showed high but not declining (rather: increasing) partisanship, and personalization, sensationalism, negativism and criticism towards the government were higher than expected (i.e. in any case higher than in Switzerland).

Concerning the expected differences on the meso-level between organizational types of newspapers, both hypotheses were supported by the data in that national quality newspapers tended towards higher professional standards, while regional newspapers showed more signs of commercialization while at the same time displaying a greater closeness to their audience:
H3: Political coverage in national newspapers is more in-depth and provides more contextual information and less personalization.
H4: Political coverage in regional newspapers displays a higher level of commercial logic, a more sacerdotal approach to politics and a greater proximity to the audience than political coverage in national newspapers.
With regard to our longitudinal and cross-country comparison (transnational processes of convergence), and thus RQ3 and RQ3a, H8 and H9 were supported by the data.
H8: Criticism towards the governing, personalization and strategic reporting will be highest in US coverage as they are facilitated by the political context.
H9: Criticism towards the governing will be low in German and Swiss coverage, as a sacerdotal approach to political coverage can be expected while a pragmatic approach is predominant in Great Britain and the US.

H6 and H7 were only partly supported by the data: Media and commercial logic only grew stronger in all countries with regard to visualization, polarization and a focus on analysis. All other characteristics differed between the countries. Additionally, we only predicted correctly that Swiss coverage would be the least mediatized and commercialized. Concerning the other three countries, coverage in Great Britain proved to be more commercialized than in the US, and German press coverage has grown rather similar to its American counterpart.
H6: Media and commercial logic have grown stronger over time in all four countries. This means that characteristics like simplification, polarization, conflict, personalization, negativism and sensationalism as well as analysis and objectivity have increased in press coverage over time.
H7: Media and commercial logic are most dominant in the US coverage, dominant in British coverage, less dominant in German coverage and least dominant in Swiss coverage.

Our hypothesis concerning standards of democratic quality, H10, related to RQ5, was supported with regard to our expectations towards German and Swiss political coverage but

showed a greater degree of elite democratic standards than expected in US coverage and generally few but more discourse democratic standards than expected in British coverage.
H10: Based on the findings of Ferree et al. and on the characteristics of political communication culture in each country, German and Swiss political affairs coverage is likely to tend towards elite democratic standards, while British and American political affairs coverage can be expected to tend towards more participatory standards, with US press coverage presumably exhibiting the most discourse democratic characteristics of all four countries.

In the following chapter, we will take a closer look at the complex longitudinal and transnational processes and mutual interrelationships which the findings suggest, and will place them within the larger theoretical context of comparative political communication research to provide new insight and future guidance to comprehensive, comparative evaluations of transformations, influences and quality of political media coverage worldwide.

Discussion and Conclusion

There are several main points which we can make concluding this study: (1) First, Hallin & Mancini`s Liberal and Democratic Corporatist Model do hold up as a theoretical framework for systematically examining types of political media coverage. This is true, as expected, in combination with a visible impact of individual national factors of influence on a more detailed level. (2) With view on media logic as the heart of mediatization, we can indeed differentiate between professional and commercial logic, which are both spread by processes of mediatization and transnational convergence. (3) However, the transnational spreading of commercial concepts like negativism or professional norms like objectivity and an evident transnational convergence does not simply lead to a homogenization of national political press coverage; instead, the relevance of macro-level systemic, national factors and the resulting journalistic perceptions and behavior creates different discursive structures of opportunity in different systemic and national contexts sometimes even leading to an increase in heterogeneity. (4) Observing this, we can say that professional journalistic standards and thus aspects of professional logic differ between the continents - analysis and objectivity as professional journalistic standards can be assigned to European and American journalism respectively, and can be viewed as mutually influential. (5) Regarding the organizational

meso-level factors of influence, it became clear that newspapers at the regional level constitute a more fertile ground for the impact of commercialization than do their national counterparts, which however also strengthens positive coverage characteristics like inclusion and a close audience relation. (6) Furthermore, all the examined journalistic efforts evaluated by democratic quality standards show a surprising dominance of elite understandings of democracy in a majority of political press coverage. (7) This said, on the micro-level of journalistic behavior and subjective perceptions and interpretations, the overall rise of audience relation and analytic coverage seems to see journalists trying to provide their audience access to a political coverage which has grown more complex and is expected to measure up to an increasing number of professional standards. Following, we wil expand on these concluding points.

The Explanatory Power of Models of Media and Political Systems

With this study, we set out to assemble an analytical framework to facilitate „highly contextualized comparative studies“ (Esser & Pfetsch 2004, p. 398f). We did so by integrating the models of media systems developed by Hallin & Mancini (2004) into a structure of influential factors for political media coverage on the macro-, meso- and micro-level, which on the macro-level additionally consider longitudinal processes of mediatization and transnational convergence. We then applied this expanded framework to the political press coverage of four Western democracies which stand exemplary for four different environments, each presenting a cluster of national features with regard not only to Hallin & Mancini`s models, but also concerning the progress of mediatization expected and concerning their expected persuasibility towards global trends. Empirically testing the Liberal and Democratic Corporatist Model, we found that they do hold up as theoretical framework for systematically examining types of political media coverage: A grouping of US and British versus German and Swiss political press coverage respectively was visible. We can thus confirm the assumptions of impact of the relative dominance of market mechanisms and commercial media combined with low state intervention and low political parallelism on press coverage patterns in the Liberal Model, whose two countries` coverage presented higher personalization, strategic reporting, negativism and conflict than its Democratic Corporatist Model`s counterparts which showed less conflict, less personalization, less negativism, less

strategic reporting and only little criticism towards the government, while integrating a higher number of established sources than its english-speaking counterpart.

At the same time, there is a visible impact of individual national factors of influence on the more detailed level of individual countries, and there are a few additional distinctions which can be made. For one, the special, somewhat uncertain position of Great Britain in the Liberal Model, which Hallin & Mancini already point out, is additionally emphasized when looking at the professional journalistic standards indicated in its coverage: Great Britain clearly groups with the other two European countries regarding the standard of analysis, thus splitting the countries into two groups according to continents. In addition, however, Britain is also the country whose political press coverage over time is most affected by commercialization, with a level of conflict even higher than in US coverage, and with high negativism as well as an increasing level of personalization. This again moves it closer to the American coverage, locating it somewhere in the middle between the two continental European countries and North America. And while Germany and Switzerland now seem to create a homogenous "continental Europe"-group, this is not quite true, either. As we have already mentioned regarding Switzerland, its political press coverage and especially its democratic news standards are still strongly influenced by the political system structures. We found the highest presence of dialog, inclusion, consensus and issue coverage here, and a combination of journalistic suggestions and demands with only little criticism, negativism and personalization - all features paralleling the Swiss political system of consensus. Swiss coverage shows the most differences to American coverage and seems farthest removed from the influences of mediatization and commercialization, with partisanship, opinionated reporting and a dominance of political logic being easily detectable in its political press coverage.
German coverage, on the other hand, is visibly closer to its American counterpart - we found indicators of commercialization with personalization and sensationalism, as well as a growing presence of objectivity. The observable close relationship between US and German media coverage is also easily understandable as rooted in German-American history after WWII and the important role North America played at that time in German history; especially with regard to the re-constitution of the German media landscape and the education of German journalists. However, the fear of "Americanized" coverage which disagrees with (German) democracy seems unjustified, as German political press coverage still displays many

characteristics paralleling national features with high and still increasing partisanship, low negativism and government criticism, and still very present opinionated reporting in the tradition of journalists as partisan commenters.

Concerning US political press coverage, several instances of its unique system characteristics were visible, with personalization mirroring the unique role of the American president, ethnocentrism attesting its dominant role in world politics, and the in comparison highest level of objectivity in reporting expressing America`s crucial role in the historical creation and development of objectivity as a journalistic standard. The United States` role as most commercialized of the four countries was as well confirmed, with coverage being characterized by a higher level of strategic reporting, media self-references and an even higher amount of staged events being reported on than in British coverage, which we expected to be especially influenced by a government very aware of how to professionally handle and influence political media. With no large stretch of the imagination, this could end with the confirmation of two common or at least well-known assumptions in comparative media research: Switzerland is an exceptional case and Americanization is real. However this conclusion would not do justice to the complex picture that resulted from the present analysis. Rather, the findings of our data, which results from a very detailed codebook (which could provide enough material for several more articles), mirror the complexity of theoretic assumptions presented in the first part of this thesis. On an abstract level, political press coverage in different Western democracies can be conveniently sorted into two main models which differ from each other largely based on the outlines of their macro-level structures. These outlines are indeed visible in the press coverage of the models as expected, with the acknowledgement of even more details on the level of individual countries uncovering the particularly distanced position of Switzerland and making a specific German-American relationship visible. Once transnational factors are added to the mix however, the picture grows even more detailed and less clearly arranged. The two models are now accompanied – and partly neutralized - by distinctions along the continental borders, and specific relationships between geographically or historically (or, possibly, culturally) close countries are further disclosed, as we will now see.

Convergence Without Homogenization: "Double Standards" in Professionalization

Regarding the logics of mediatization, we can across all four examined countries differentiate between professional and commercial logic, both additionally spread by processes of transnational convergence. Regarding the questions which introduced this study, it can be summed up that some indicators for commercial orientation in political media coverage are increasing over time, while at the same time inclining professional journalistic standards of objectivity and analysis limit their growth.

The results of the present study show the usefulness of the proposed differentiation between commercial logic often associated with decreasing coverage quality (Picard 2004) and professional logic pertaining to the use of reporting strategies facilitating the mediation of political events to the public and indicating professional standards of behavior. Data reveals that commercial logic and professional logic develop differently across countries. While both have increased since the 1960s, as our factor analysis showed, they also show clear distinctions between countries. The rise of commercial logic has caused a convergence and greater homogeneity of political press coverage in Western democracies – political press coverage across all countries seems to have leveled off on a certain middle ground of commercialism, with commercial logic still rising in some areas and countries but flattening in others. The increase in the relevance of professional journalistic standards on the other hand has more complex consequences. This is mainly due to the fact that different professional norms are predominant in Europe versus North America. The worldwide rise of the importance of the objectivity norm rooted in American journalism is largely acknowledged and has been discussed in the literature (Hallin 2009, Plasser et al. 2009, Norris & Inglehart 2009). The rise of analytic political coverage as an originally European phenomenon however has not received as much attention as of yet. Barnhurst and Mutz (1997) observe a rise in analysis-focused reporting slowly displacing the traditional event-focused coverage, but they only hint at the possibility of transnational dynamics as cause for this development. Yet the empirical analysis of the present study supports this assumption. It seems that while the rise of objectivity in political press coverage across countries is still ongoing, there exists a second, less noted transnational process in the converse direction: The journalistic standard of analytical coverage which provides contextualization and even interpretation of political events and processes and which has has traditionally been present in European journalism (with Great Britain in this case relating more to Europe than to the US),

is spilling over to US political reporting - the factor analysis showed a general increase of analysis, but with US coverage presenting distinctly different than the group of the three other, European countries. Thus, while we could possibly speak of Americanization of European coverage regarding the relevance of objectivity (especially for German press coverage), there is also a Europeanization of US coverage taking place with view on the role of analysis in political coverage. Both analysis and objectivity are thus on the rise in political press coverage, but the consequence of their increase is not a homogenization, like one might expect. Processes which can be described as fusion (Norris & Ingelhart 2009) or hybridization (Plasser 2000) can be assumed to take place within journalistic work on both continents, but these processes are not necessarily visible in political media coverage, nor do they quickly lead to homogenized media coverage. The overall picture can instead even result in a higher degree of divergence. This can be explained by intricate dynamics occurring within the content production. Various structures of discursive opportunities result from the relevance of both analysis and objectivity, and these structures can overlap and interfere with one another. This is especially true for the case of the US, where the discursive opportunities caused by the objectivity norm have been and still are dominant but are now accompanied by a focus on analysis. For the European media, the integration of objectivity into their reporting seems easier, as their tradition of political commentary allows them to simply include more separation between news and opinion to achieve a higher percentage of objectivity in their coverage. In the US, on the other hand, integrating analysis against the standards of objectivity is more difficult, as the inclusion of pure commentary pieces runs against longstanding norms of professionalism. Thus, it seems that analysis is often included under the disguise of seemingly objective reporting – a rising number of implicit commentary and less separation between news and opinion in American political coverage supports this assumption. Hence, mediatization and the diffusion of different journalistic norms across continents seem to pose a challenge for political press coverage and can even lead to a diversification of media coverage across countries.[91]

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[91] Of course, this diversification could be of a transitory and temporary character and might at a later point level off like commercialism does – future studies will have to take a closer look at this possibility.

So again with regard to the questions posed in our introduction of the present empirical examination, we can state that political media coverage in Europe and the US does become more homogeneous over time, but only with regard to certain characteristics and not to the same degree in all countries, as national political contexts and necessities seem to have become less relevant in some countries but remain strong in others. The only three indicators of commercial logic which could be proven to have increased over time in all countries are visualization and conflict. However, the most interesting and clear-cut case of transnational convergence can certainly be seen in the already mentioned approximation which German coverage has gone through with regard to its American counterpart: The most mutual dynamics compared to all countries are observable between these two countries, and some part of the Americanization-Europeanization-processes which we have described seem to take place mainly between the US and Germany. The most internationally autonomous coverage, on the other hand, which displays the still strongest adherence to political logic based on discursive opportunity structures supporting the inclusion of the people in the political process and favoring a focus on consensual decisions over the depiction of conflict and strategic maneuvers can be found in Swiss political press coverage. This is additionally supported by the finding that the presence of journalistic demands in political press coverage is not impacted by time differences, but rather shows the largest distinction between countries, with Switzerland displaying the clearest presence of this coverage pattern not only related to journalistic autonomy, but also to a self-conception of media actors and citizens as active participants in politics.

The Two-sided Fate of Regional Newspapers: Audience Commitment and Commercialization

Coverage patterns traced back to influences on the macro-level thus exhibit clear mutual interferences, especially between individual systemic factors and longitudinal, transnational processes. But how do meso-level factors of influence come into play with regard to these processes? It seems that the interrelated dichotomies which we have observed between the Liberal and Democratic Corporatist Models, professional and commercial logic and the US and Europe also emerge concerning national quality newspapers and regional newspapers. Article length and presence of analytic reporting both showed clear distinctions between newspaper types in our factor analysis, with national newspapers containing longer

and more analysis-focused articles. We could also confirm a more in-depth coverage in national newspapers, as well as more contextual frames and less personalization. In regional newspapers, in contrast, we found a higher amount of indicators of commercial logic. At the same time, a greater proximity to the audience was visible in regional political press coverage. While this presents a clear-cut and expected interpretation of a higher professional standard of reporting in national quality newspapers, it indicates a more complex situation for regional newspapers` political coverage: One could say they constitute a more fertile ground for the impact of commercialization than do their national counterparts, being more often dependent on advertising revenue and cater to an audience defined by geographical limits rather than by specific thematic interest or academic demands. But at the same time there is a rise in audience proximity, with more non-established sources and the integration of personal narratives, with which regional newspapers also strengthen a feature that has for a long time also constituted one clear advantage over national quality papers and been a pillar of a positive feature of journalism not related to the definitions of professionalism we have talked about so far. And this is the practice of including the specific audience a regional newspaper caters to, of integrating its worries, questions and opinions into its political coverage and of trying to enhance relevance of abstract political issues by encasing them with personal narratives of relatable audience members. And with these coverage characteristics, we are addressing coverage features which are quite at odds with the seemingly dominant understanding of democratic quality, which is based on the elite paradigm of democracy. Clearly, regional newspapers adhere less to the quality standards indicated by the elite paradigm of democracy, which we have found to be dominant in a majority of political press coverage still today, and across all countries. Still, we think these two concepts guiding coverage have more in common than visible at first glance, as both aim to reduce complexity.

The Elite Character of Quality Standards: Managing Rising Complexity

Political media coverage especially in Germany and the US fulfills surprisingly elitist democratic quality standards, which stand in close correspondence to the growing relevance of the journalistic professional norm of objectivity. The normative evaluation of the quality of political media coverage is often linked to the functions of media for democracy, and literature mostly describes these functions according to a Schumpeterian understanding of democracy, focusing on information and election participation (see for example Norris 2000).

We argued that, depending on various conceptualizations of democracy, the quality of political press coverage can be defined according to various standards. Not aiming to take part in the normative discussion about good and bad media coverage nor in the discourse about the prevalence of any one specific paradigm of democracy, we simply wanted to test if our assumption was supported by the data. However, while the application of democratic standards did vary from country to country, the dominance of quality standards based on the paradigm of elite democracy in Germany and the US was surprising. The dominance of legitimate and established sources played an important role, as did the reliance on sources in general. Accordingly, criticism towards the government was rather low. Switzerland was an exception in this regard, exhibiting quality standards more closely linked to a pluralistic understanding of democracy – here, the impact of Switzerland`s political system based on consensus-finding and direct democracy is again clearly visible, and this observation might provide an explanation for the unexpected dominance of elite standards in US and German coverage: The increasing mediatization of these two countries and the accompanying importance of the objectivity standard corresponds best to elite standards of democratic quality for example with regard to ascribing evaluations or judgments to sources instead of to the journalist. Therefore, consequences of mediatization play a significant role not just for the general character of political press coverage but also for the standards of quality with relation to democracy that are realized in the coverage. They might to a certain extent superimpose effects of the political system, as the case of the US indicates: Elite standards were expected to a higher degree in German press coverage based on the proximity between media and politics, but not so in the US coverage. But what if, with the words of Reese (2007) in mind - “media phenomena have a variety of causes, and [...] within a web of interconnected forces explanation is a matter of emphasis.” (no page numbers), we turn the tables on elite quality standards and the poor quality coverage ascribed to commercialization? We might be able to explain the adherence to elite standards of democracy in the US parallel to Tuchman`s objectivity strategies functioning as simple instruments to superficially display adherence to objectivity in reporting: The democratic standards which result from an elite understanding of democracy are standards which can be realized most easily and most time-efficiently. They provide clear indicators for the audience that they are presented with high-quality, democratically valid, professional journalistic work. Instruments like reliance on established, respected sources are easy to apply and their legibility for or decoding by the audience is

certain, while the application of more participatory standards like personal narratives or non-established sources might easily be read as poor quality coverage, as commercial exploitation of the audiences` delight with anecdotes or quotes from "people like me", substituting fluff for the more appropriate, necessary confrontation of a lazy audience with complex, abstract political matters with the help of experts and the governing. If we assume the elite standard of democracy to be the most historically renowned and common approach to democratic quality, it can also be assumed to be the most recognizable. As with strategies ob objectivity, journalists thus try to visibly fulfill the most common, most recognized expectations towards them.

And with this, we have arrived at one more issue the findings of the present study are pointing towards: Political press coverage, and with this the journalist providing it on the micro-level, is confronted not only with a rising complexity of political issues to communicate and make accessible to their audience, but at the same time with internal and external expectations to measure up to an increasing number of professional standards. Journalism has to invent itself as a true profession, which takes place not only through increasingly seeking a more autonomous position vis-a-vis politics as indicated by the decrease of affirmation over the years in our factor analysis, but also through striving to depict professionalism clearly in coverage. The process of mediatization has brought growing importance to the media in the public sphere, which is linked to more public responsibility and higher public expectations, possibly accompanied by shrinking goodwill and growing skepticism from the side of political actors. Journalists thus need to work with indicators which the broad public can easily read and decipher. They need to handle this situation, they need to make sense of complex political situations while fulfilling growing professional expectations from the organizational as well as the political and social level. Growing globalization is adding further impact on coverage requirements - be it through the necessity of reporting not just on national, but on international and even global news at all times, or through the now possible comparison of national reporting styles. To meet these numerous standards and to manage the complexity present both regarding the content of political coverage as well as regarding its professionalism and style, journalists in countries (or contexts) in which pluralist notions of democracy are not deeply rooted, or in which those notions have started to be corrupted (or maybe only confused) with characterizations of commercial imperatives, might well turn to

elite democratic standards to ensure the perception of their work as qualitative. This could be seen as one explanation of the high presence of elite standards of democracy not just in German and Swiss coverage, where the political systems provide its foundations, but also in US coverage. And with journalism being an area still not quite sure of its actual professionalism, with a comparably short history of professional education and hiring processes, traditional print journalism is simultaneously under attack by the new force of the internet and novel online news media which prove at best to be faster, more flexible and globally comprehensive. This might even further the fight of traditional print media to distinguish themselves visibly and easily decodable by relying on a strict set of professional rules combined with an adherence to elite democratic standards - a strangely conflictive combination of journalistic autonomy and obedience towards perceived political elites.

To pursue the assessment of this assumption and its consequences for international political press coverage in more detail will certainly be one objective of comparative political communication research during the next decades. Furthermore, on a more general level, the findings of this study reveal and fortify the necessity of empirical comparative political communication research, as many idiosyncrasies and underlying relationships cross-nationally cannot be assessed or might not even be acknowledged without comparative examination. We have tried to expand and contextualize comparative political communication research further and to design an empirical approach as comprehensive as possible to assess similarities and differences between the political media coverage of Western democracies and to explore their possible causes and consequences. Due to the difficulties inherent in empirical comparative research as well as the exploratory character of this project, which aimed at a broad representation of countries and media types and decades, and possibly somewhat misestimated the practical constraints of a comparative research project conducted without international cooperation and relying on an international sample this large, there are certainly limitations to the present study. Future research needs to acknowledge meso-level factors and organizational differences to a greater extent, possibly integrating fewer years and/or countries and concentrating on a larger newspaper sample as to facilitate statements regarding entire countries. Besides that, the specific findings regarding Great Britain (especially concerning the role of the Prime Minister and a possibly resulting higher degree of personalization in media coverage) as well as Switzerland certainly merit more attention and a

more in-depth examination to allow for more concrete conclusions regarding individual country characteristics. We do hope that the research presented in this thesis induces broader empirical examination of the issues presented, as for example an assessment of democratic quality standards on the micro-level or an application of our empirical framework to additional countries. At the time of writing, this project is continued in the NCCR to include France and Spain as well as newsmagazines and television news from all six countries, and it is our hope that the contribution of this project to the understanding and advancement of comparative political communication research will be of help for many further studies.

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